MAXIMUM ROCKNROLL

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FATTY CAKES AND THE PUFF PASTRIES

ANTIFACES | LAVENDER FLU | JE ME SOUVIENS
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TOP TENS

Some of our contributors' top ten (or so) things we've reviewed this month. For review consideration, send two copies of vinyl, or one copy of CD-only or demo releases to our PO Box. We review independent punk, garage, and hardcore releases—no major labels!

PETER AVERY

LUX VANITAS – The Secret life of... 12"
BS□ – Ekki á Ledid EP
BLUES LAWYER – Guess Work LP
LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP
BRANDY – Laugh Track 12"
CONDUIT – Drowning World LP
MOVING TARGETS – CD
TERRY – I'm Terry LP
THE LOPEZ – 45
SIGHTLINES – Love Ethic EP

MATT BADENHOP

DEZERTER – Kolaboracja II LP
BSÍ – "Ekki á Ledid" EP
ALIANS – Mega Yoga LP
STIFF LOVE – 45
JAD – demo
DAYLIGHT ROBBERY – EP
KHIIS – Saboor EP
KOLMAS PÄIVÄ – Demot '85 LP
SAUCERS – LP
LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP

HEATHER BLOTTO

1984 – LP
MARSZAŁEK / SIKSA – split LP
LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP
L.O.T.I.O.N. / SCUMPUTER – split LP
RESOUNDING NO – CS
ERA BLEAK – CS
COLLATE – Liminal Concerns 12"
HONEY BUCKET – Furniture Days LP
PRIMO! – Primo Amici LP
THE LOPEZ – 45

MITCH CARDWELL

TERRY – I'm Terry LP
PRIMO! – Primo Amici LP
OBNOX – Templo Del Sonido LP
RAGTIME FRANK & THE DRIVERS – 12"
COLLATE – Liminal Concerns 12"
SAUCERS – LP
STIFF LOVE – 45
THE FEVERS – live
THE PHANTOM SURFERS – live
POPS & THE JERKS – live

VICKY CASSIS

ALIEN BOY – live / GLAZER – LP
HIRS COLLECTIVE / JENNA AND THE PUPS – split 12"
JABBER – live
COHERENCE – LP
NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS – EP
LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP
STIFF LOVE – 45
BUM OUT – 12"
THE SINO HEARTS – CD

ROBERT COLLINS

BITTER AND ABUSIVE LANGUAGE – CD
V/A – Maudite Tangue #4 CD
BOO HAG – CS
SYSTEMATIC DEATH – EP
MILK BATH – live
BEYOND PEACE – EP
TRANSIENT / BASTARD NOISE – LP
OCTOPOULPE – live
NIGHT PROWLER – CS
MAN VS. MAN – CD
SCYTHE – Rigor Mortis EP

JOAN DETORO

SCYTHE – Rigor Mortis EP
SYSTEMATIC DEATH – EP
PRIMO! – Primo Amici LP
INVERTS – live
V/A – Karate Klub Dublin HC// Punk Compilation LP
OBNOX – Templo Del Sonido LP
KHIIS – Saboor EP
DEIMOS CULT – live
SYNTAX – CS
BEYOND PEACE – EP

MIRANDA FISHER

LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP
PIOUS FAULTS – Old Thread LP
VITAL IDLES – Left Hand LP
SAUCERS – LP
PRIMO! – Primo Amici LP
TERRY – I'm Terry LP
COLLATE – Liminal Concerns 12"
CEMENT SHOES – EP
SKELETON – EP + live
THE FEVERS – live

LAYLA GIBBON

PRIMO! – Primo Amici LP
TERRY – I'm Terry LP
STIFF LOVE – 45
COLLATE – Liminal Concerns 12"
VITAL IDLES – Left Hand LP
PIOUS FAULTS – Old Thread LP
BLUES LAWYER – Guess Work LP
LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP
PROTOMARTYR SPRAY PAINT – 45
SIGNAL – Rat Pink Eye EP

GREG HARVESTER

Hidden deep in the furor...

KENNY KAOS

JETBOYS – 45
MYSTERY GIRL – "Wild & Mean" EP
NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS – EP
STIFF LOVE – 45
THE BLANKZ – 45
PRIMO! – Primo Amici LP
BLUES LAWYER – Guess Work LP
SNAKESKIN – Hangnail 12"
BETA BOYS – Late Nite Acts LP
LIME CRUSH – Sub Divide LP
THE LOPEZ – 45

CAROLYN KEDDY

What we do is secret...

RAY LUJAN

BUM OUT – 12"/ STIFF LOVE – 45
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MOVING TARGETS – CD
NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS – EP
SIGNAL – Rat Pink Eye EP
SLOKS – Holy Motor CD
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VITAL IDLES – Left Hand LP
RUBELLA BALLET – live
THE VIBRATORS – live

FRED SCHRUNK

Happy honeymoon!!!!!

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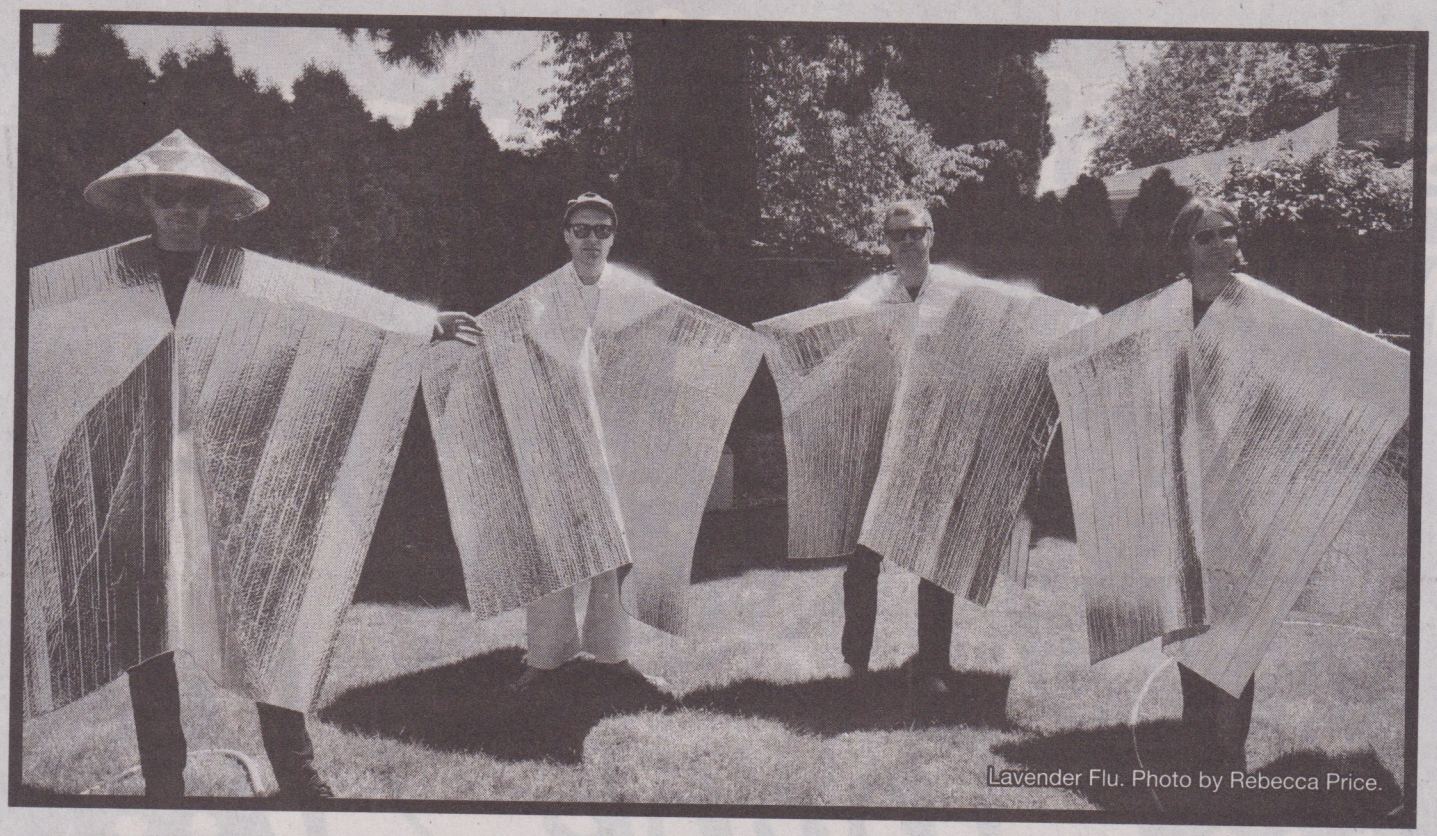

Lavender Flu. Photo by Rebecca Price.

ISSUE #426

There were several errors in issue #425: the photographs in the Hoarder interview were taken by Edlin. Additionally, Rana Fayez's name was spelled incorrectly throughout the Yallapunk interview. *MRR* deeply regrets these errors, and offers our apologies to Edlin and Rana.

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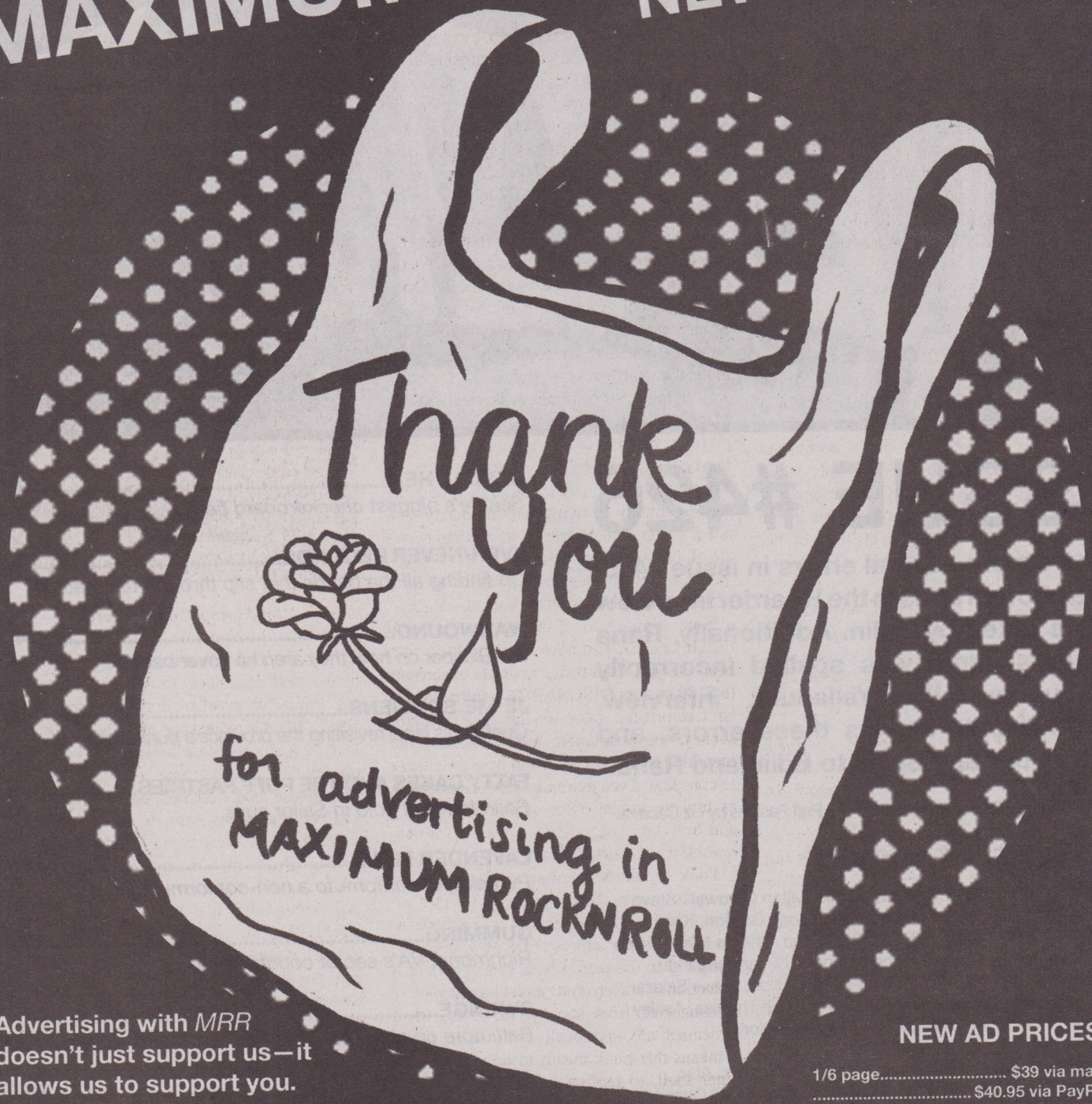

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COLUMNS

Consumer's Guilt

Welcome to the summer edition. I'm back at the keyboard after a short break filled with a wedding, K-town, vacation, and a house move. Now that summer's coming to an end; what I need the most is two weeks on a deserted island, alone with a case of wine.

It's mid-August, and the Copenhagen weather is back at its normal rainy state, while the cloud cover is a reminder to start popping vitamin D like candies before fall sets in for real. The weather has been the big topic of this summer. First Europe was hit by snowstorms in spring in what seemed like a seven month winter; four weeks later, Scandinavia entered the warmest May in 150 years. After which we entered a summer of heatwaves, draughts, and forest fires that transformed Scandinavia into Southern Europe, minus the food culture unfortunately.

The weather conditions spiked a climate change debate in the media, and to be honest I don't know what's up and down anymore. To me, our climate has been lost to big industries that we as common people can never control, neither individually or collectively. Growing up in the '90s, my school years were filled with talks of the ozone layer and lessons on how to save water and electricity in our homes in order to preserve it. Turns out that alone didn't do the job, so now the media's attention has turned on two big sinners: the meat industry (ditched that decades ago) and flight travel (very guilty).

The air travel guilt made me wonder why I travel and also what status air travel has. As I discussed in my last column on punk festivals, it does seem like you have to travel for certain festivals to stay in the loop. The punk scene brings the joy of having friends all over the world, and thereby the wish to visit those friends. In punk circles, this is common, and while this might not bring additional status in punk circles, it sure does in non-punk crowds. Traveling to meet old and new friends in the punk scene is amazing, but it does require air travel to cover the area that my close friends are spread over. This summer I was lucky enough to return to Japan, my favorite place, and had the best time thanks to my wonderful friends there.

No matter what positive things air travel brings me, there's no denying that air travel is a privilege and luxury, that it's destroying the climate, and that the climate changes will most likely hit the hardest in areas where air travel isn't a possibility for the common person. In Scandinavia, it's as if air travel is seen as a human right, and cheap flights are valued more than the workers' rights. So I wonder why flying is so common in the punk scene. Maybe it's the status of traveling to certain places or hanging out with a certain crowd, or maybe it's just a personal motivation to travel. Nonetheless, it's a confirmation that the punk scene certainly is living within society, and not a group detached from it, and hence we are all consumers in society.

We are even consumers within the punk scene. In the past handful of years, there's been a huge increase in "punk accessories" and merch, and you can now get everything your heart desires; from fridge magnets to earrings to $100 custom DISCHARGE t-shirts. Which isn't surprising: since we live in a capitalist society, the preeminent way to present our identities is through what and how we choose to consume. Even extreme anti-consumerism, as told in utopian tales of dumpster diving and train hopping, is truly a way to identify oneself in the capitalist society.

Punk should be viewed as an alternative to and an escape from the structures that are established in a mainstream society. Of course some of these structures or traces of them are remained in the punk scene, seeing as it is a reflection of society and cannot be completely disconnected from society. However, when structures are uncritically echoed in punk, it means that punk means to only change an outer shell, to replace the brand logos with spikes, while inner values and actions are blindly following what society brought us up to do. It's the easy option, just like booking a cheap flight because you can, but it's not necessarily the right one. How do we make other decisions when we were brought up to be consumers?

These structures are impossible to change. But we can make conscious choices when it comes to consumption. Hopefully it will be possible to stay in the loop, and (almost) guilt free sport the hot non-sweatshop punk shirt of that season while boarding a train to the next hyped fest.

Bad Habits Die Hard b/w
Why Addiction is Not a Disease

The idea that addiction is a disease is the law of the land nowadays. In a way, this model has worked in favor of drug users and their allies—it's discredited the idea that addiction is a choice; a personal failing, one in which the brain is fully capable and complicit in. The disease model can help people understand and come to terms with the nature of their addiction and resolve some of the shame that may be propelling them deeper into it. It can solace families and friends of people who are experiencing addiction. As the only mainstream model that acknowledges how addiction changes the brain, it helps people to understand that the person you love isn't deliberately destroying their relationships. And in that way, it helps to relieve some of the stigma of drug users being selfish, apathetic, or weak.

But at the same time, it breeds a new kind of stigma. The disease model assumes that people are hopeless victims of destiny, that they are born wrong. It tells users that they are powerless against their cravings and it insists that they will be plagued with this curse their whole lives.

The disease theory has given people a more accurate concept of the role of the brain in addiction, but while it has generated marginally

more compassionate treatment from the medical community, the disease model is an overly simplified and overly pathologized lens with which to view addiction. It de-legitimizes all of the other factors that play into addiction: developmental issues, psychological and physical dependence, trauma, environment, depression and other mental health concerns. These are all things that need to be considered to maintain long-term recovery, but chalking it all up to a single chronic disease makes it kind of impossible to do that.

Big pharma, insurance companies, and Recovery Inc. are preaching the disease gospel like their bottom lines depend on it. Most often, people need to be diagnosed with a disease in order for their treatment to be covered by insurance. Companies can make a lot of money by perpetuating the idea that addiction is a chronic disease which requires lifelong treatment. Right now in the US, drug treatment is a 35 billion dollar industry and growing.

Hell, there's resort rehab centers that cost tens of thousands of dollars a month for premium "medical care" which are more or less just fancy 12-step programs and therapy. Plus you're completely removed from your environment, or any realistic environment for that matter. It sets people up to fail as soon as they re-enter this cruel, cold world. A documentary that came out in 2015 called, *The Business of Recovery* exposes the US's big problem with unlicensed recovery homes popping up all over the US to make a quick buck.

There's no shortage of theories to explain addiction, and many of them have cycled in and out of the spotlight over the past half-century. The biological model states that genetics and physiology dictate your ability to moderate substance use; the psychological model in which mental illness is to blame. The temperance model claims that exposure to substances causes addiction: everyone is at risk. The sociocultural model states that cultural norms inform addiction. The individual model emphasizes personal responsibility and a person's sense of control in their lives. Then there's the moral and spiritual theory, which has to do with God and shit.

In actuality, it's more nuanced than all that. Biology and psychology cannot exist in a vacuum. You are a product of your environment—your culture, your access to resources, your opportunities, your socioeconomic status, your experiences inform everything in your life. In my quasi-professional opinion, a person's experiential predisposition to addiction cannot be overstated.

RAT PARK

Rat Park sounds like the name of a punk house for recovering oogles. It's also the title of a study conducted by Bruce Alexander in the late '70s. Alexander created what can only be described as a park for rats. Rats, like humans, are social creatures. Putting a rat in isolation accomplishes the same thing as putting a human in a cage; it drives them nuts. In Alexander's park, the rats got to hang out with one another, play on wheels, mate, and eat as much food as their tiny little hearts desired.

The research team tried out several different scenarios to try to get to the root of addiction. In one of them, there were four different groups of rats. I'll call them group A, B, C, and D. Groups A and B started the experiment in cages. A stayed in captivity the entire 80 days of the experiment while B were switched from their cages to the park after 65 days. Groups C and D were raised in the park, but C moved from the park to cages 65 days in while D remained for all 80 days. It's a cruel world, I know. All four groups had access to two different water options at all time; one was just regular water, the other was laced with morphine.

The caged rats, groups A and B, went straight for the morphine water while the park rats could take it or leave it. They tried it every now and again, but never became dependent and preferred the plain water. The caged males drank nineteen times more morphine water than the non-caged rats (statistically significant).

In a different experiment, they had caged rats drink morphine-laced water for 57 days and deprived them of regular water. When that group of rats moved into the park, they could choose either regular water or the morphine-based water. Even though the rats started to experience withdrawal symptoms without the morphine, they still overwhelmingly favored the regular water.

Alexander tried a bunch of different experiments based on theories and could not seem to create anything that could be categorized as addiction within rat park. Of course there is a lot more variation when it comes to humans, but we aren't *that* dissimilar. In ideal or even tolerable circumstances, humans are much less prone to addiction. They can even partake in "hard drugs" from time to time without getting addicted. But when humans become depressed, isolated, hopeless, depressed, or their environment starts to deteriorate, the conditions become rife for addiction.

Substance Use Disorder is a newer term being thrown around that paints a more accurate picture of addiction. While disease is a narrowly defined kind of thing, disorders exist on a spectrum. They can range from moderate to severe. To me, the term disorder also allows more room for the sociological and developmental factors that are actually at the core of addiction.

BAD HABITS

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) rests on the disease theory while incorporating a healthy smattering of Godandshit. Since 1935, AA groups all over the world have been telling addicts that they are powerless to their addiction and that the only solution is 12-steps, God, abstinence, coffee, and cigarettes. The first of AA's twelve steps states: "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol." The 12-step model works for some people, but to a much lesser degree than is warranted by our medical and punitive dependence on it. Scientific studies have yet to prove the efficacy of AA's methods, yet people are still systematically court-ordered to attend their meetings.

Like I've said in the past, most people who experience addiction are able to wean themselves from chemical dependence at some point in their lives, without any assistance from self-help groups. That's not an attempt to discourage anyone from getting involved with AA or any other support group. It takes a variety of tactics to get the goods. Peer support is incredibly valuable and AA is nothing if not a venue to form a supportive community.

But studies have shown that 75% of alcoholics are considered to be in full recovery twenty years after the start of their addiction, and more than half of them are able to resume non-problematic drinking. And 75% of the 75% of alcoholics who are in recovery achieved it without any assistance from rehab or AA programs. This is also true of prescription opioid users, but to a lesser extent when it comes to the help of medical interventions. Almost half of those who are addicted to prescription opioids recover without any formal treatment or support groups.

AA and the disease theory as a whole can be demoralizing: success is based on the number of consecutive days you've been abstinent—abstinence from *anything*, not just the substance of your dependence. So if you're smoking weed to deal with dope withdrawal or anxiety you can forget it. When people fuck up just one time, their progress is erased and they're back to square one. Even if it's been fifteen years. And statistically, most people do slip up. The average relapse rate hovers between 40–60%.

The following argument is heavily, *heavily* lifted from a book called *The Biology of Desire* by neurologist and self-proclaimed addict, Marc Lewis. Lewis weaves simplified neuroscience lessons with real-life accounts of addiction.

Lewis started using substances to escape isolation and depression in high school, and after trying lots of different things he eventually settled into prescription opioids and then heroin. He dropped out of college for many years after an overdose but eventually

went back to graduate. He was studying clinical psychology until a string of pharmacy robberies landed him on the front page of the newspaper. Eventually Lewis got through his addiction and managed to become a world renowned, boundary pushing neuroscientist.

Lewis explains that yes, the brain fundamentally changes with addiction. But neurologically speaking, addiction is the result of altered brain patterns, not underlying disease. His model incorporates most of the other theories I mentioned already, noting that environmental factors as well as cognitive and emotional development inform addiction. Although we may not think of it as such, addiction is a learned or acquired behavior, albeit one that's much deeper and more ingrained than most other learning processes. It's an outcome of completely reasonable brain functions; a bad habit.

NEUROPLASTICITY

"What fires together wires together" is Lewis's favorite quote. Made famous by psychologist Donald Hebb in the 1940s, Hebbian theory explains neuroplasticity as the strengthening of synaptic signals that occur when cells in different areas of the brain are activated by simultaneous stimulation (like in anticipation of getting high). The more these synapses start to fire together, the more interdependent they will become in the future. This is how connections are made and it's essentially how learning occurs.

Brain scans of people who are experiencing addiction show synapses firing all over the brain when the substance is presented, which does not occur when people who were not addicted to the chemical were put in the same circumstances—evidence of neuroplasticity. Addiction is actually not a neurological abnormality, but a product of neuroplasticity. Lewis refers to the formation of addiction as an "uncannily normal feature of the human brain."

Grey matter is the space in your brain where synapses fire and connections are made. Loss of grey matter can cause learning and memory problems. Brain scans of people who have experienced long term addiction show that grey matter can decrease by up to 20%. Brain scans have also demonstrated that grey matter can be restored after several months of abstinence.

Neuroplasticity is a concept that's kind of difficult to make sense of, but for example think about learning a new instrument. When I first started playing drums, I had a really hard time figuring out how to incorporate the kick drum in with what my hands were doing on the high-hat and snare. The most frustrating thing was that even when I understood what I was doing wrong, it still wasn't clicking in my brain. It was weird and clunky and frustrating as hell.

Eventually I learned that if I understood how something was supposed to go, I just needed to give myself some time for my brain to adapt to the pattern and my body would eventually fall in line. So I practiced a bunch and got better. The things that vexed me about playing drums ten years ago are things that I don't even think even about today. It was hard to learn new things at first because those synapses in my brain had never fired together before. But the more I worked at that skill, the more ingrained those neural pathways became and the stronger those new synaptic relationships got. This is all thanks to neuroplasticity. Now I don't have to think about playing simple beats—it's just muscle memory. It's a habit. Unfortunately, this can also work in the opposite way. Neuroplasticity can allow you to form and settle into destructive thinking and forming bad habits too.

Lewis explains it better, "The brain changes with all learning experiences, and it changes more rapidly and more radically in response to experiences with high motivational impact. Such changes lead to the formation of habits—neural and behavioral habits—habits that become self-perpetuating and self-stabilizing. These habits replace other less compelling activities. That's just the way the brain is designed, by the rough tools of evolution, so that it can work as efficiently as possible. As with upright spines, it's not a perfect design and it sometimes leads to pain."

OUR BRAIN ON DRUGS

None of this means that habits need necessarily be difficult, uncomfortable, or even unpleasurable to acquire. You may not even be aware that they are forming. The human brain has evolved to depend on habits because it frees up space for higher level thought. This is why you can walk and talk at the same time. According to Lewis, personalities can be seen as a composite of a person's set of habits.

There's a specific part of the prefrontal cortex that is responsible for reasoning, self-control, recall, and planning that suffers as addiction takes shape in the brain. The less traveled this pathway, the more these skills begin to dissolve. So if you are hyper-focused on fulfilling a single goal and your thoughts revolve entirely around it, those skills are going to fade.

And then there's dopamine. Here's a quick recap from my rant about dopamine a few months ago—it affects everything in your brain, but has a major impact on anticipation, motivation, arousal, attention, and memory. An imbalance in dopamine can cause depression, decrease impulse control and energy, etc.

As addiction becomes increasingly habitual, cues that trigger dopamine become increasingly narrow. Eventually the subject of the addiction (heroin, meth, sex, food, alcohol, gambling, etc) becomes the only thing that triggers dopamine activity. Other goals or consideration of long-term consequences fall by the wayside as the brain hyper-focuses on the one single pursuit that provides what amounts to pleasure.

That extreme focus on one substance also makes it impossible to focus on future goals. You're living in the now and are incapable of maintaining those things that dopamine controls: impulses, memory, motivation, attention, and don't forget about the breakdown in the prefrontal cortex, which is simultaneously working against you. It makes it impossible to think about tomorrow, next week, next year. If your dopamine levels are only influenced by a single stimulus, you will forsake all else to get to it. The brain is designed that way by evolution to go after what Lewis calls "the lowest hanging fruit."

Your brain is also designed to discount future rewards compared to more available ones, even if those future rewards may be greater. This is called delay discounting, Lewis calls it "now appeal." Those with diminished impulse control, i.e. anyone that is predisposed to or experiencing addiction, are going to feel this much harder than the rest of the population.

It's a self-perpetuating system. Addiction is not the only neural habit that develops this way; depression, anxiety, infatuation all work in the same way. Infatuation mimics the neural trajectory of substance addiction, which explains why when you have a serious crush on someone you can't seem to think of anything but that person and how and when you can get close to them again. They become your substance of choice.

SO WHAT?

So while the disease model implies that someone in recovery will necessarily be in danger of relapse throughout their whole lives, Lewis explains that just like with anything else, new habits can replace old ones. It won't be an easy process, though. Lewis write, "People have to really be ready, because there has to be a powerful surge towards other goals...Goals about their relationships and feeling whole, connected and under control. The striatum is highly activated and looking for those other goals to connect with."

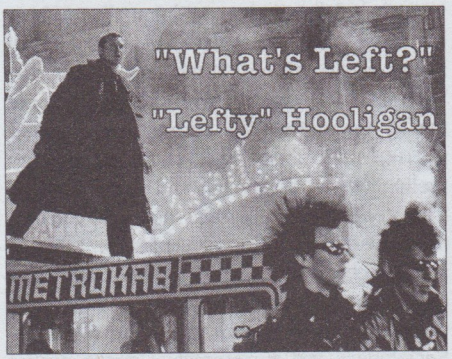
Brain changes that develop through addiction can be reversed, and it doesn't take all that long for the brain to repair itself post-addiction. Sociological and environmental circumstances are continuously diminished by the medical community because these things would amount to social determinants of health, not disease. The most commonly prescribed treatments for addiction are AA, mindfulness, meditation etc.—and while useful to some insofar as they inspire behavior change, none of these are medical interventions. There is no other disease in the catalog of diseases that is treated similarly.

The disease model of addiction is predicated on the idea that addiction fundamentally

changes the brain, and it does. But brains are built to change throughout your whole life, and the processes in which addiction is solidified in the brain are indicative of rational developmental measures. Addiction is undoubtedly a problematic neurological issue, but in order for it to be a disease like any other existing disease, it would either need to be caused by some environmental exposure, or its progression would need to be significantly atypical from other neurological processes. Neither of these things is the case.

One could then try to make the case that addiction is different because it can lead to extreme and negative outcomes. But that's also true of other addictions. Researchers have shown that neurological patterns present throughout other disorders such as sex, gambling, food, and video game addictions are almost indistinguishable from the brain's response to substance addiction. These obsessions can be harmful to say the least, but no one calls an unhealthy fixation on love, sex, or food a disease. Despite this scientific truth, The National Institute on Drug and Alcohol Abuse (NIDA) and The American Medical Association (AMA) maintain that addiction is caused by substance use.

All this to say, I have some appreciation for the disease model as a stepping stone. But calling addiction a disease is an oversimplified, pathologizing, disempowering, and a plain scientific inaccuracy. I'll settle for "Substance Use Disorder" for now, but I intend to keep my brain fully elastic in case scientific developments prove me wrong or a better term comes along.



I don't like words that hide the truth. I don't like words that conceal reality. I don't like euphemisms, or euphemistic language. And American English is loaded with euphemisms. 'Cause Americans have a lot of trouble dealing with reality. Americans have trouble facing the truth, so they invent the kind of a soft language to protect themselves from it, and it gets worse with every generation.
—George Carlin, "Euphemisms"

Sometimes a globalist is just a globalist.
paraphrase of fake Sigmund Freud quote

I grew up in the 1950s, in a "more innocent time." It was a time when people didn't curse, not openly that is. When I hit my thumb with a hammer in shop class, instead of shouting "Jesus Fucking Christ!," I was told to say "Jiminy Cricket!" I envied my Polish-born dad, who could let loose a string of Polish expletives whenever he injured himself.

It was actually a more euphemistic time, when great pains were taken to soften and hide reality in the name of politeness and gentility. As the rest of the Carlin routine sadly, if humorously, illustrates, the WWI term "shell shock" had been transformed into the WWII term "battle fatigue" and was in the process of becoming "operational exhaustion" during the Korean War. I would witness its transmutation yet again into "post-traumatic stress disorder" during the Vietnam War.

Euphemisms substitute mild, indirect, or deliberately vague words for ones considered offensive, harsh, or too blunt for the listener's own good and the audience's sensibilities. We use plenty of them today, from passed away or departed for died, and correctional facility instead of jail, to differently-abled or handicapped instead of disabled, and ethnic cleansing for genocide. They're not to be confused with code words, where a word or phrase has a very specific meaning to a very specific audience, while remaining innocuous to the uninitiated. Code words are used a lot in dog-whistle politics, a relatively new term where words and phrases that are intended to mean one thing to the general population are deliberately used to convey different, additional, or more specific meanings for targeted specific demographics. Terms like "family values" and "pro-family" are intended to be innocuous to the public while conveying homophobic and misogynistic meanings to those in the know. Code words also conceal reality.

In Ventura in the 1960s I knew the town character, a slightly lopsided silver-haired old man named Quince. Quince liked to attend civic events and city functions dressed in what appeared to be a WWII uniform, although upon closer examination he'd incorporated elements of WWI, Civil War, and even Revolutionary War uniforms into the mix. On Saturdays he hung out on the sidewalk in front of the post office with a card table of mostly John Birch Society literature. He was big into the perils of the International Communist Conspiracy, but among the literature was a booklet entitled "Banking and Currency and The Money Trust" by Charles A. Lindbergh.

I knew that Lindbergh had been the first to fly solo across the Atlantic in a single engine monoplane called The Spirit of St. Louis and was nicknamed Lucky Lindy. When Quince saw me thumbing through the small volume he sidled up to me and spoke in a low voice.

"Congressman Lindbergh was one of the first to warn against the cabal of international bankers such as Morgan, Rockefeller, and Rothschild who instituted the Federal Reserve System in 1913, giving them control of interest rates, the stock market, and the capacity to create money out of thin air. He called those international bankers the 'Money Trust' and denounced the Federal Reserve Bank's control over the American republic's economy, causing inflation, the continuous decline of the dollar, and skyrocketing national debt ever since."

"Didn't Congress and President Wilson create the Federal Reserve?" I asked, having been a precocious history buff in my adolescence.

"There were sinister powers behind the Federal Reserve Act." Quince talked as if he were revealing a dangerous secret. "Lucky Lindy was a great American hero, but even he had to be circumspect about revealing the true evil force behind the greedy power grab by those international bankers."

Quince glanced about, reached into his coat, and surreptitiously pulled out a plain covered pamphlet that read "The International Jew: The World's Foremost Problem" by Henry Ford.

That was my first experience of a euphemism colliding with a code word. The modern conspiracy theory about who *really* rules the world was ancient even back then, with the Illuminati, Freemasons, international bankers, New World Order, and alien shapeshifting lizards now prominent among the covert cliques identified as secretly running the world from behind the scenes. But conspiracy wingnuts purporting to expose those truly responsible for the clandestine system of global domination almost invariably circle back to their OG suspects, "the Jews."

The promising anti-globalization movement of the 1990s and early 2000s was susceptible to right wing anti-semitic tendencies from its inception, which then developed into "soft" anti-semitic organizations like AdBusters. AdBusters went on to initiate the Occupy Wall Street movement which, while largely left wing, attracted right wing elements that blamed the Federal Reserve, international "banksters," and the Jews for all that was wrong with the world. On the Right, the terms "international bankers" and "Zionists" have frequently gone beyond euphemism to become code words for Jews. The current use by Trump nationalists and their supporters of "globalists" and "cosmopolitan elites" to characterize their opponents employs code

words that imply that the Jews are behind it all. Those on the Right who now rail against "cultural Marxism" never mention that their original Nazi trope blamed the Jews for being behind the evils of both Communism and capitalism. Again, the current meme of "cultural Marxism" goes beyond euphemism and even code words into "snarl words" that tar anyone with progressive politics as a secret Communist while implying that the Jews are covertly responsible for all the world's ills.

Euphemisms are intended to soften the impact of difficult ideas. Code words disguise the meaning of those same problematic ideas for the general public while specifically targeting a select audience for incitement. Snarl words are derogatory terms that always attack and can never be used in neutral or positive ways. But what about words that hide something that is always kept in plain sight? Words that simultaneously conceal and reinforce concepts with which we are all too familiar?

"Capitalism" and "capitalist" are just such words. Nobody denies that capitalism and capitalists rule the world. There is no conspiracy, no clandestine cabal, no secret government bent on world domination. Capitalism is as natural as the air we breathe, according to capitalists, because humans are individualistic, selfish, and greedy by nature. Their "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange" is also part of human nature and gives rise to capitalism naturally. The ascendance of a powerful stratum of capitalists is also natural. If capitalism is the natural order of things, then capitalists gain power and rule naturally, rightfully due to merit and not by force or conspiracy.

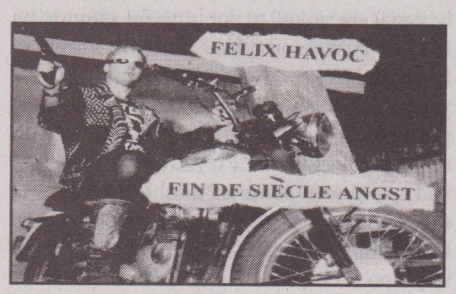
Capitalists comprise a social class and constitute a ruling elite, however, according to Marx. And capitalists go about their activities mostly in the open. They form associations openly, from the Chamber of Commerce and National Association of Manufacturers to the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. They make their plans openly—in the Wall Street Journal and the Financial Times—with no conspiracy necessary. And they carry out their plans, create their organizations, and govern openly with the consent of the people who freely exercise their right to vote as citizens of a democracy. Conspiracies do occur. The secret US war in Laos and Cambodia, the Watergate break-in, and the Arthur Andersen-associated scandals in the 1970s were all conspiracies. But by and large, capitalism and capitalists operate in the open.

This is all to disguise that there is a capitalist ruling class; that capitalism functions through exploitation, appropriation, and outright violence; that in a democracy politicians are bought and paid for by the capitalist ruling class; that the state is the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence; and that "[t]he executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole *bourgeoisie*." Capitalists are the original globalists. The current talk about "nationalists" vs "globalists" is actually about the power struggle between two factions of capitalists for control within the international *bourgeoisie*. It's all about misdirection, so I call such words sleight-of-hand words.

Capitalism as an economic system has been around for a little over 750 years and did not achieve global dominance until 1989–91. Hominids have been around for about six millions years, modern humans for around 300,000 years, human behavioral modernity for around 50,000 years, and human civilization for about 6,000 years. Most human societies prior to capitalism were communal, hunter / gatherer, and tribal. That's another reason why capitalism is neither natural nor a product of human nature.

PERSONAL PROPAGANDA

Personal blog: amatiasz.wordpress.com
Political blog: leftyhooligan.wordpress.com
Website aggregator: gamatiasz.com
Publishing website: 62milepress.com
Facebook profile: facebook.com/georgematiasz
Facebook writer page: facebook.com/gamatiasz
Personal Instagram: @gamatiasz
Book Instagram: @onepercentfree



I was watching a comedian on TV the other day who had a joke that went something like, "For everybody out there over 30, remember when we were the future? Remember when people believed in *us*?"

I found myself a few weeks ago sitting in the parking lot of a grocery store in a working-class suburb of Minneapolis at 6:30 in the morning thinking about that comedian's line. I had gotten up early and gone to work to get a head start on the day. I thought to myself, "Whatever happened to all the goals and dreams I had as a young punk rebel?" How did I wind up here in the suburbs of a provincial Midwestern city getting up at sunrise to install some windows? Being a part of the hardcore punk scene in the '80s was the defining influence of my life. But for all the sound and fury, what did we really accomplish? There are thousands of other people like me with roots in the hardcore scene who had it affect them in some meaningful way who now walk among us leading normal lives. It's often said that we failed to change the world, but we made some change in ourselves. I guess that's reassuring at some level, but it does not deny the truth that as any kind of countercultural or political movement, hardcore punk failed.

Like many grown-up young radicals before me, I'm looking back at my youth from the vantage point of today in feeling disappointed, disillusioned, and dismayed. All of that outrage and rebellion, all of the protesting against Reagan and Thatcher seems to have added up to very little when you take two steps back and look at the situation today. Reagan and Thatcher succeeded in their Capitalist Revolution which, in a very short period of time, has resulted in the rich becoming very much richer and the poor staying poor while the middle class is slowly pushed down into the ranks of the poor. Remember that FINAL CONFLICT song "Political Glory?" That spoken word intro about how life was changing for the worse under Reagan? Listen to that 30 years later and it almost seems quaint.

One of the things that was often said in the early days of punk was that it was rebelling against the failure of the hippie movement. The hippies had started out talking about counterculture and protest in quickly degenerated into hedonism and commercialism. I hate to say it, but the punk scene managed to follow just about the same trajectory.

Probably the high point of punk activism in the '80s was the Stop the City protest in England. And perhaps the Rock Against Reagan and No Business as Usual protests in the USA. I would add to this perhaps, some of the protests around squat evictions in Europe in the involvement of people from the punk and hardcore scene in the autonomen movement.

Stop the City was a radical piece of political theater and protest. However, as CONFLICT said in their song on the topic "the day was brightened but it left no mark." There was no meaningful change resulting from the protest except perhaps a feeling of having taken a stand against the status quo on the part of some of the participants. The No Business as Usual protests, consciously organized to copy Stop the City, were tainted from the beginning due to the fact that they were organized in large part by the Revolutionary Communist Party's youth brigade. This was a craven attempt to recruit people to a Maoist-Leninist party from the then burgeoning political punk scene. The protests in DC where I participated did not amount to

a whole lot. As I recall, only maybe a hundred people showed up and it was more an act of political theatre that any kind of major statement or direct action against the establishment. In fact, one of the more invigorating protests I was involved with in those days was quite spontaneous. There was a free concert in Dupont Circle protesting against the re-imposition of Selective Service and US intervention in El Salvador and Nicaragua. At the end of the last band's set, one of the organizers got on the mic and urged people to march on an Army Recruiting Office a few blocks away. Surprisingly, almost the whole crowd at the gig marched through the streets chanting and trashed that recruiting office. I saw one of my high school chums pick up a magazine rack and throw it through the window. By the time the cops showed up, that recruiting office was pretty well trashed. I'm sure there were many other small-scale events, but in retrospect, they were meaningful mostly only to those who participated. The Rock Against Reagan tours were admirable, but were also organized and financed mainly by the Yippies, again an attempt by older radicals to capitalize on punk. Although the story of the RAR tours begs to be told in these pages. To this we might add the involvement of punks in the German Autonomen movement and famously the Vancouver Five. Of all of these, it could probably be argued the Autonomen had the biggest effect, but this was a movement that predated punk and was not an outgrowth of the punk scene. It just attracted many people from it.

All of this aside, all of that punk activism and protest did not stop Reagan, Thatcher, and Bush, it didn't end any wars, and it didn't stop a whole lot of suffering. The only consolation that many people bring up when these kinds of things are discussed is that many people left the punk scene to become activists or changed their life in ways that led to less suffering in the world such as adopting veganism. Indeed, when you didn't disregard the trajectory of punk also parallels the hippie movement where many people dropped out of political activism in the '70s to affect inner change exploring spirituality and the like.

I frequently talk to people my age who came out of the punk scene who have a hard time understanding why there has not been an explosion of punk in the current extreme right-wing political climate. We all felt that our scene was a reaction against Reagan and the country's shift to the right. I know there are great bands around today and many of them have lyrics critical of the system, but is it is a far cry from Paris in '68 or the Days of Rage, much less Stop the City or No Business as Usual.

Perhaps I was naïve to believe that hardcore punk was ever going to add up to anything more than cool music and good times. And certainly for many around me that's all it ever added up to. But inside of me still burns the fire of the young rebel who wants to see some radical change. My generation rebelled against society and the failed hippie movement. We in turn failed on a macro level although some people argue that there was some small success on a micro level. I keep looking around in dismay and just hoping that coming around the corner is the next big explosion, the next big upsurge.

Looking, Acting, Being Cool

A few years back I went to a gig in Rochester, NY. I have been regularly attending shows in Rochester since I was a teenager being that it is a mere hour away from Buffalo, where I have always resided. Some time around 2007 or 2008, the Rochester punk scene exploded, and I felt it was one of, if not the, best scene[s] in the entire country. It was absolutely bonkers. Every time I attended a gig in this strange rustbelt wasteland of a city, it seemed I would find a new and incredible band that until then was unknown to me. It felt as if there was an almost endless supply of young weirdos, all of whom were stoked to put forth the effort to be in killer punk bands. Alas, those days seem to be behind us now. I noticed the shift a couple years back when a bunch of the Rochester fast punk bands started playing a lot slower, with more predictable rock'n'roll leaning stuff. I had questioned some of the heavy hitters at the time whether all the punks had done too many hippie drugs, and that's what burnt them out. That was never confirmed, tho it was also not denied. Currently the standard fare in that city seems to have continued into a realm even farther away from hardcore punk and into that of old time rock'n'roll. Cover songs, girl group style backing singers, piano solos, and even bands self-identifying as frat rock have taken the place of the booger-eating blaster punk bands of yesteryear. Don't get me wrong, I absolutely love rock'n'roll music. I love it as much, if not more than most punks. These bands are so good that after seeing some of the current slew of them I have been left speechless by how tight and proficiently they play. They're just simply not punk, so I don't care quite as much about them.

So, I'm at this show a few years ago and I'm watching one of the remaining weirdo hardcore punk bands from the area and having a real cool time. Immediately to my left during their set was Rochester NY hometown hero, and close personal friend of mine, Will Carroll, of *National Teen Set Outsider* fame. For those of you unfamiliar with *National Teen Set Outsider*, it is a long running 1/4 page zine full of kooky interviews and juvenile ramblings that the aforementioned lunatic has been compiling for the better part of a decade. I have been shocked at the caliber of people Will has interviewed, such as surf legend DAVIE ALLAN or big name porn actor Ron Jeremy. When I asked how he pulled off interviewing such notable names, he merely commented "well, if you bother celebrities enough you can get them to agree to anything, buddy."

I told Will how great I thought the band that we had just watched was and he responded in his unnaturally high-pitched voice while running a comb through his greasy black and blonde pomade coated hair, "yeah, I think they're real good, buddy, they just look like a bunch of dorks. They really need a fashion consultant to help them out a bit." The absurdity of this statement really got me to thinking about the aesthetics of being in a band and how, as much as I don't really care how people look or choose to dress or anything, there are certain things I notice myself bothered by whenever I witness a band doing them. Now, I'm not trying to get into a whole set of rules à la The Ben Weasel Official Punk Rock Dress Code, which graced the pages of this rag some time ago, and I think it goes without saying that bands should do whatever the hell they want, I am merely bringing up some things that I personally find off-putting when watching bands play live.

Choosing to forego a discussion about attire and style, let's talk about hair for a minute. Specifically, long hair. I am in support of punks donning whatever hairstyle they choose, whether it be short, long, or anything in between. However, as I have been a long hair myself for quite some time, I notice myself bothered by certain things when I see long haired punks performing. Having long hair is cool, but it is also incredibly annoying. It takes a huge commitment to keep your hair long. It gets in the way when doing physical labor, clogs up your drains making showering equivalent to standing in shallow murky water, it finds its way into your food, when summer rolls around it can be downright brutal rubbing on your sweaty neck and shoulders, but you power through because long hair looks cool. Period. The biggest perk to having long hair is letting it fly when you're playing music. Undeniably, hair whipping around looks real damn cool, but even if a

lower energy band member has long hair and it's just kinda bobbing there, it still looks awesome! Gimme a head with hair! Long, beautiful hair! It seems borderline criminal to go through all of the annoyances of having long hair just to ball it up and cram it under a hat when playing a set. In my mind, same goes for buns, ponytails, pigtails, other animal tails one might tie their hair up into, anything keeping your long hair up during performance to me is a big no-no. Your long hair getting in the way when you play? Perhaps it's time to consider any other number of punk approved hairstyles. I, however, say flow it and show it, as long as you can grow it.

As an aging man with suspect genes, I have been cursed with the issue of male pattern baldness. About five years ago I began noticing what a problem this was becoming when every single photo I saw of a band of mine playing, the most obvious thing in it was my growing bald spot staring back at me (case in point, check out the PLATES interview from your back issues of *MRR*, you'll see). Nevertheless, I have maintained my commitment to keeping my remaining hair long. Someday, and it is seemingly rapidly approaching, I will not be able to ignore it any longer and will be forced to pick up a razor and shave this dome clean. This can sometimes be a very cool look, but I'm fairly certain I've got some weird lumps going on up top that's gonna have me end up looking like one of the Kanamits from that one *Twilight Zone* episode about eating people. I plan on combating it by growing an obnoxiously large beard to kind of offset the whole thing and I'll hopefully end up looking like some sketchy 1970s professional wrestler. To see so many full, beautiful heads of hair being taken for granted and squandered during live sets makes my heart break a little.

All silly aesthetic issues aside, not to downplay how I actually feel because these are very real issues in my mind, I also believe that the main thing that actually makes a band seem really cool when performing is confidence, or at least feigned confidence. Too often I have seen the unsure glances between band members, the sheepish apologies to the audience about messing up a song, a singer reading their screamed unintelligible lyrics to a new song out of a notebook or, god-forbid, off the glow of an iPhone screen. Nobody knows if you play a song less than perfectly. Ever. I have even embraced the sweeping generalization of telling people that I have never messed up live. It's not like anyone else could know what I intended to play, after all. Have we forgotten that being in a band instantly makes you cool? This is what our teen selves all aspired to be. If your band is playing a gig, even if your band is not great, you are already far cooler than everyone in the room while you are performing, and if you for some reason don't think so, I believe you should fake it and pretend it is true. After all, at some point looking and acting cool directly translates to being cool.

—Biff Bifaro

I was struggling a little bit to figure out what truly new (as opposed to newly reissued) music to write about this month, but I got an email completely by chance from my friend Aubrey in LITHICS as they were passing through the UK on their European tour, and she recommended that I check out this band called HANDLE that they had just played with in Manchester. Totally serendipitous, because their six-song demo collection, *Demonstrations*, is so completely my thing—all sharp, clanging incantations built from bass, drums, keyboard, and voice, with rhythm at the forefront even as everything else is collapsing around it. "Rubber Necks" and "Step By Step" both lock into propulsive grooves from mutant disco beats and harsh metallic percussion that intersect with a deep, menacing bass throb and urgently yelped and chanted vocals to skirt the line between the deconstructed danceability of early '80s New York groups like LIQUID LIQUID or BUSH TETRAS, and the more abrasive, confrontational scratch and scrape of their No Wave cohorts in DNA or THEORETICAL GIRLS. HANDLE somehow manage to be disjointed and tightly-wound at the same time (think of the delicate balance that TRASH KIT and SHOPPING pull off, if you're looking for reference points from the 21st century), crafting truly anxious sounds for uncertain futures. Can't wait for them to take the steps toward a proper physical release, because it will absolutely set things on fire when they do. (Absolute Fiction, absolutefiction.bandcamp.com)

After a handful of cassettes that appeared over the last few years, Canadian oddballs TOUGH CUSTOMER recently made their vinyl debut with the four-song *Darlene* EP on Sweet Rot, in the "slightly less new by the time y'all read this" category. Their austere-yet-playful, bass-driven vibe recalls the effortlessly cool minimalism of early '80s art-schooled heroines like OH-OK and Y PANTS, with flashes of KLEENEX-esque free-associated absurdism—"Mash" seems to follow a fairly standard post-punk combination of needling guitar, steady bass pulse, and kinetic drumming, until you start to wrap your head around the fact that lyrics are basically all about potatoes. Each song ends up subtly bending itself into similarly unexpected forms and sometimes more than once, whether it's via the band hopscotching through the sneaky, shifting rhythms of "Drum Farm," or the structure provided by the significant negative spaces between sparsely struck notes in "Clean and Clear" (the highlight of their 2015 debut tape *The Worst*, presented here in an even more tightened up version), or when a legitimately wailing guitar solo in "Soul Patch" breaks up the otherwise taut push / pull that's been constructed. I can't really think of many other modern post-punk adjacent bands who are this deep into their own self-defined and uncurbed musical universe, and that's definitely to TOUGH CUSTOMER's credit. (Sweet Rot, actualtoughcustomer.bandcamp.com)

The one-off 1979 single from the HAND GRENADES was self-released and packaged in a minimalist sleeve with no personnel credits or identifying information, which posed all sorts of questions as to who was behind the record and where exactly they had come from. Going strictly from audio cues, both sides of the 7" showcased a ramshackle post-punk sensibility in line with the DESPERATE BICYCLES, the HOMOSEXUALS, or SWELL MAPS (not to mention some nasal and vaguely British-accented vocals that sounded kind of like a bedroom-recorded Peter Perrett of the ONLY ONES), which lead many people to understandably reach the conclusion that the HAND GRENADES must have been a product of the same "it was easy, it was cheap, go and do it" school of late '70s UK DIY. In reality, they were actually from Long Island, and by the early '80s, they'd transformed into the new wave / power-pop group the SPONSORS, abandoning any hint of scratchy *Messthetics* aesthetics to write songs with skinny-tied titles like "In and Out of Love" and "Love I Can't Wait." Truth is stranger than fiction, but despite geography, the lone HAND GRENADES record has rightfully been regarded as a touchstone of UK-minded shambolic late '70s / early '80s art-punk and also one that unfortunately tends to fetch collector scum prices these days, so praise be onto Last Laugh Records, who just reissued the single as a 12" EP (*Demos to London*) with the addition of two previously unreleased tracks. "Demo to London" and "Coma Dos" from the original 7" tick

off seemingly every box on the UK DIY checklist—charmingly fidelity-challenged, treble to the extreme, shaky single-note guitar, BUZZCOCKS hooks thrown slightly off-kilter, plenty of FALL-worthy repetition. On the unreleased side, the scrappy pop of "Cocoon" could almost pass for the TELEVISION PERSONALITIES stripped of their more psychedelically mod leanings, while "Murder" repeatedly cycles through the phrase "*murder in the U.S.*" over some wiry econo-punk to a biting and almost RONDOS / early EX-ish effect. Beyond mandatory! (Last Laugh, almostreadyrecords.com)

With each new vinyl reissue sourced from the first half decade or so Flying Nun's back catalog, I've been holding out hope that Auckland's darkly angular post-punk poster children THIS SPORTING LIFE would be the next in line to have their long out-of-print records brought back into circulation. And this summer, at long last, it finally happened...well, sort of. We'll have to settle for the new *Alms for Children* CD anthology, which collects the group's two proper Flying Nun releases (1982's *Show Me to the Bellrope* LP and 1983's *In Limbo* EP), the debut 7" from 1981 that was issued under their original name of ALMS FOR CHILDREN, and a number of previously unreleased live tracks—digital is definitely better than nothing at all in this case. Along with Stratford's NOCTURNAL PROJECTIONS and Christchurch's the GORDONS, THIS SPORTING LIFE were a part of the early '80s New Zealand underground faction that fell more in line with the serrated nihilism of bands like the FALL and JOY DIVISION, in contrast to their jangly, SYD BARRETT / VELVET UNDERGROUND-worshipping peers. The FALL influence is particularly apparent in the tracks drawn from their mid-period, like "Wasting My Time," where a rickety keyboard line fights for space on top the sort of stripped-down and flipped-out rockabilly rhythm that Mark E. Smith and company continuously revisited for a good 40 years or so, with Gary Charlton's vocals wavering between deadpan and desperate in equal measure. Other highlights of an already stacked compilation: the otherwise-unreleased "Suspicious of You," with cavernous, razor-edged bass heightening the paranoid tension suggested by the title and lyrical content, and frenetic, jagged pop sensibility of "Total Loss," which features some unexpectedly chiming acoustic guitar that almost adheres to the general conception of the whole "Flying Nun sound." I don't think I've ever recommended a CD-only release in over three years of doing this column, but there's a first time for everything. (Failsafe Records, almsforchildrenthissportinglife.bandcamp.com)

Random endnote: my band COLLATE is going on tour in mid-October! We'll be passing through Boise, Salt Lake City, Denver, Albuquerque, Tempe, Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Oakland, and Corvallis—if y'all happen to live in any of those places, consider this an open invitation to come say hi, and maybe tell me where I might be able to get the best vegan food or sick record scores in your town.

Say hey at ripitupstartagain@gmail.com, more sights and sounds at futuresandpasts.org.

KICK OUT THE JAMS, COUSIN ROBERT!

So there's something called MC50 out on tour right now and it's being touted as a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the MC5's *Kick Out the Jams* album, which was recorded live in October, 1968 and released in 1969. In fact, the tour ends in Detroit, a few days before the 50th anniversary of the two live shows that the album was drawn from. Wayne Kramer is the only original MC5 member involved—all the other original members are dead, except for drummer Dennis "Machine Gun" Thompson, who wasn't asked to participate. The personnel includes people from SOUNDGARDEN, FAITH NO MORE, PEARL JAM, AFGHAN WHIGS, and, somewhat surprisingly, ZEN GUERILLA (vocalist Marcus Durant) and FUGAZI (Brendan Canty).

There's a Boston show and I could probably score free tickets from the publicist who's handling the tour, but I can't imagine it being that great. I never did get to see the original band—I'm not that old, although I did see Brother Wayne on his first solo tour in the '90s and he played a few MC5 songs. It was enjoyable and he couldn't have been nicer when I did an interview with him. I engaged in some total fan boy stuff—I had him sign my copies of *Back In the USA* and *High Times*, the latter of which I scored for a quarter at the Goldfish Pond flea market in Lynn sometime in the '80s.

Anyway, I've already got a lot going on that week and I just get the feeling it'll be pathetic. There's a live video of them covering the BEATLES' "Come Together" that's floating around and I can't bring myself to watch it. I'd imagine this is also being tied in with Kramer's autobiography *The Hard Stuff*, which I'm currently in the middle of reading and it's a pretty candid look at the ups and downs of both his musical career and personal life. One thing I learned is they recorded four songs for Elektra that were never released, since they got dropped by the label following *Kick Out The Jams*. Three of them were re-recorded for *Back In The USA*, which had some killer songs but rather tepid production. About the original recordings, Kramer said, "these were the best quality, most creative recording sessions we'd ever done, and it left me filled with confidence for the future." Unfortunately, they don't seem to have ever seen the light of day. I can't find any other information on them.

Growing up, in the 1960s and '70s, I discovered most of the music I loved through the radio and various music magazines and books. When I was a kid, I had a little red transistor radio that I had tuned to the Top 40 station WMEX. I'd hear something I liked and ask my folks to get it for me and they usually obliged. The only time my mom refused was when I asked her to get me BLOODROCK's gory hit "DOA," which details a plane crash in bloody detail and somehow made it into the top 40, despite being banned on a lot of stations (not in Boston, though). Usually, though, it was the standard hits of the day—BEATLES, ROLLING STONES, ERIC BURDON & THE ANIMALS, etc. But I'd also hear more psychedelic stuff like ELECTRIC PRUNES' "I Had Too Much To Dream Last Night" and the BLUES MAGOOS' "We Ain't Got Nothin' Yet," both of which remain favorites to this day. And here's a bit of trivia: Erika Daking from the underrated late '90s / early 2000s LA hardcore punk band F-MINUS's dad is Geoff Daking, who played drums in the BLUES MAGOOS! Yep, I'm just full of useful information...or not-so-useful. Or just full of it. But let's move on...

I didn't have a lot of friends growing up and the ones I had didn't tend to have the most adventurous musical taste. But then my second cousins on my mother's side moved back to our neighborhood, after having lived down south for a number of years. There were five kids and I started hanging out with the two oldest, Jimmy and Steve. They were both a few years older than me—I was fourteen and I think Steve was eighteen and Jimmy was twenty. They were both big music fans and were mainly into blues-oriented rock. I've referred to them as my "stoner cousins" because they liked the weed but they didn't share it with me. They did share their record collection with me, though, letting me borrow and tape them. They were musical mentors and opened my ears to a lot of great stuff. Some of those records ended up in my collection for good since they, uh, moved to

Florida before I could return them. Things like JIMI HENDRIX's *Smash Hits* album, the first CAPTAIN BEYOND, a terrific hard rock album that had a 3D cover, the YARDBIRDS' *Having A Rave-Up* and TED NUGENT'S *Tooth Fang and Claw*. I know, but as I joked in my April Fool column earlier this year, it was pre-racist Nugent. They were both talented guitarists and Jimmy, who I've reconnected with in recent years, still plays in a blues band. And, for the record, he's just as disgusted with the Nuge's racist political views as I am.

Getting back to the MC5, I took a slightly different path to discovery. I'd probably seen the name here and there but hadn't encountered their music. Anyway, when I was about sixteen, I was visiting my Aunt Bette and Uncle Bernie's house and their son, my cousin Richard, was in his room listening to records. Richard's about the same age as I am, but we didn't really like each other that much. I remember walking in and he was listening to AMERICA's "Sister Golden Hair" and playing a flute along with it. That was one good reason to have a low opinion of him, with such dubious musical taste. And a flute? Not quite as cool as Jimmy and Steve's guitars. They probably would have laughed at him or done something nasty with that flute. They were pretty bad-ass. My childhood friend Mark, who lived across the street from them, told me there always seemed to be a police car showing up at their house. They were troublemakers, but my mother loved them and they were always great to me.

Richard, on the other hand, was a studious, upper-middle class Jewish kid and a bit of a snot, to be honest. At that time, I was rockin' out to AEROSMITH, BAD COMPANY, the SWEET and bands of that ilk. So the AMERICA record ends and Richard takes out another record and he said, in essence, we're about to hear something completely ridiculous. I thought him playing AMERICA was ridiculous enough (although I'll admit I liked "A Horse With No Name" when I was eleven or so). The record was *Kick Out The Jams* and, the minute the opening chords of "Ramblin' Rose" burst through his stereo speakers, it was love at first listen. He thought this was silly, stupid music. I figured the record belonged to one of his older brothers or, less likely, his sister, since he was the youngest of four kids. All I know is that it was some of the highest energy shit I'd heard up to that point. Around the same time, I also heard the censored, "brothers and sisters" instead of "motherfuckers" version of "Kick Out The Jams" (the song) on one of those cheapie comps on the Warner Bros. Special Products imprint. I found it at the Paperback Booksmith (later a Waldenbooks) in the Swampscott Mall. They had a pretty good record section and would have some decent cutouts, if anyone remembers what those were. I probably didn't pay any more than $4 or $5 for that double LP, which was called *Heavy Metal*, but, while it had bands like BLACK SABBATH, LED ZEPPELIN, DEEP PURPLE, and URIAH HEEP, it also had decidedly non-metal acts like the EAGLES, GRATEFUL DEAD, and YES. I can't recall if I picked that up before or after the visit to my aunt and uncle's house.

Over the years, I always wondered whose record it was. As I said, Joanne, the oldest, was probably too old and didn't seem the rock'n'roll type. She was a Presidential scholar and I still remember the picture of her shaking hands with LBJ that was on top of my grandparents' TV set. That left the two middle sons, Jeff and Robert. I was at a family gathering a couple of years ago so I thought I'd try to solve the 40-year-old mystery. When I asked them, it turned out it was Robert's record. That made complete sense, in retrospect, because I remember when they visited us at our cottage in New Hampshire and, at the time, Robert had mentioned how much he liked the JOE WALSH album with "Rocky Mountain Way" on it (and I still think it's a great song and if that makes you laugh, piss off). So it turns out he was the rocker in the family and we had a good time talking about records for a bit. Better than talking about politics, because he's a Trump-lover and retweets garbage from Ted Cruz. I sent him a picture of my three MC5 records through Twitter—and he got a kick out of it—but I ended up unfollowing him after seeing some of the right-wing drivel on his page.

By the way, Richard grew up to be a pretty great guy and I find him a lot more likable now. He's an economics professor at Wesleyan and writes books about banking and other financial topics. A bit different from the drivel I peddle month after month (oops). I didn't get a chance to ask him if he'd ever changed his mind about the MC5, though. Maybe at the next get-together, I can play him some of their stuff on my iPhone. It is the 2010s, after all. I'll bet those MC5 and AMERICA albums are long-gone...

CAN YOU FEEL IT?

Four new releases from the Richmond, VA Feel It label. First up is the Olympia (via KC) band BETA BOYS, with their debut 12" *Late NITE Acts*. It's their best stuff to date, following a number of 7"s. Snotty, snarly hardcore punk with textured guitar shadings à la *Dance With Me*-era TSOL. There's an overarching darkness both musically and lyrically but not really falling into the goth category, even with doomy-sounding songs like the title track and "L'Appel Du Vide." A power-packed journey destined to give you nightmares.

There were a lot of confused-looking faces when PIOUS FAULTS played with IMPALERS in Cambridge over the summer. I don't think people were prepared for their off-kilter approach to hardcore. One guy was trying to dance hard to it but soon gave up. Their *Old Thread* album is a noisy, art-damaged excursion that revels in its abrasiveness. Everything from the hammering speed bomb "Site" to the thorny post-punk dished out on "Cope," "Longevity, "(At Least) I Remember," and "Worship The Surface." The latter consists of two parts stretching out almost seven minutes and moves into an intense cacophony. The lyrics come across as entries of poetic verse set to the music and, if there's a running theme (a "thread," in other words), I imagine it's to free yourself from life's constraints. Truth be told, the record is a lot better than the live set, where things got lost in the din. Challenging and chaotic.

In a more accessible vein is a new two song 7" by STIFF LOVE, "Attitudes / Out Of Control." Another pair of catchy rock'n'roll tunes with a tough garage undertow. Keep 'em coming! Finally, CEMENT SHOES' debut vinyl release, *A Peace Product*, also features a pair of tracks. "Fruity Fun-House" and "I $aw The Devil Again (Last Night)" are lengthy songs mixing up hardcore and hard-edged rock'n'roll, along with a Lumpy-ish snarl. Volume and attitude. (PO Box 25045, Richmond, VA 23260, feelitrecordshop.com)

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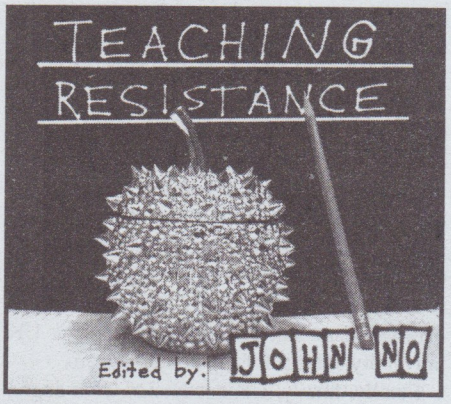


What do teachers do when the institutions we work within (and / or around and / or against as needed) are pressured by powerful forces to become extractive rather than constructive? When students, instructors, and non-administrative staff end up giving much more than they gain; when the more-equitable, justice-oriented goals of education are overwhelmed by the always-present forces of opportunism and corruption?

This column has dissected numerous instances of profit-driven opportunism

COLUMNS

wreaking havoc in secondary schools (K-12), but labor exploitation in universities is also an ever-intensifying international issue. The steady march of neoliberal school "reform" efforts, aka the privatization of public education, is squarely aimed at extracting higher fees from students while breaking employee unions and isolating teachers. In the United States, this powerfully-backed assault on fair treatment for students and school employees has also extended to attack current unionization efforts, such as the movement to organize adjunct professors. Though the state of affairs in the wake of harsh government oppression of unions (such as the Supreme Court's recent Janus decision) in the United States has grown so dire that workers frequently fantasize about better conditions in Europe, things have gone significantly downhill there as well.

Organized capital's demands for austerity and free market-oriented reform have very much extended into the schools of ostensibly "socialist" Europe, with predictable results, and the UK is currently embroiled in one of the worst such situations in the region. So what do teachers and students do in these situations? Stand together in solidarity and fight back, while recognizing that the true essence of education extends far beyond the confines of any institution or classroom. This month's column is by ***Colleen Morgan****, an instructor and lecturer in digital archaeology and heritage at the public University of York, England, who has been organizing and fighting against a variety of neoliberal "reforms" while still teaching by any means necessary. Colleen can be contacted at colleen.morgan@york.ac.uk*

Amidst the ongoing horrors of rising fascism in the US and Europe, the devastation of Yemen, child detentions and global environmental disaster, a strike among university lecturers in the United Kingdom seems hopelessly twee and woolly. The surface cause of the strike—fighting for our pensions—sounds downright quaint even within the UK context, but it is within a landscape of intensive, predatory neoliberalism that has been eroding the UK university system for the last 20+ years.

Finally, finally, UK academics were angry. The casualization of labor that is common in the US university system has been infiltrating the UK, making fast and destructive progress. Lecturers are under incredible pressure to recruit students to shore up budgets that have been hollowed out by the government, are evaluated by arbitrary metrics, and are under impossible workloads that led to a Cardiff University lecturer committing suicide. The accompanying pressure on students has caused an unprecedented mental health crisis; our university's mental health clinic is completely oversubscribed, and we are encouraged to become "mental health first-aiders" to try to pick up the wreckage caused by the marketization of education.

Within this context, university employers decided to end guaranteed pension benefits by tying them to the success of the market. The University and College Union took a vote on a strike, and the membership overwhelmingly went for it. So in spring of 2018, barely six months into my first "real" job as an academic, I joined a bunch of staid, slightly scared, and distracted academics out in the snow.

The strike action was a rapid education for me—though I've been teaching in universities since 2006, my lectureship had basically been firefighting, developing new courses, getting used to new responsibilities, and occasionally seeing my almost two-year-old daughter. I didn't really think I'd have to learn the specifics of my pension, the timeline of escalating student fees (beginning to understand why Tony Blair is so thoroughly despised), and the subtly different rules of protest and industrial action in the UK, but there we were.

I'm no stranger to protest; my mother took me to an anti-nukes rally as a child in the early 1980s, and I protested the build-up to the 9/11 (forever) wars and took action as an Archaeology PhD student in Berkeley many, many, many times, as perhaps one might expect. Throughout it all, I also maintained links to punk, finding resonance in Big Daddy Soul's (né Tim Kerr) words:

"Think about the kind of revolution you want to live and work in. What do you need to know to start that revolution? Demand that your teachers teach you that."

I have also managed to argue for punk and anarchist approaches in archaeology, archaeology as a form of self-actualized labor, and as a provocative and productive counter to fast capitalism and structural violence. But I was new in the job and a bit mystified by the UK context, unsure if union stalwarts had much use for a brash American. There was a very lukewarm response to the strike among other academics, who mostly just wanted to get on with what we love doing—teaching and research. The students were angry. A consumer-model of education has been enforced by rising fees and an increased emphasis on marketability and with the strike looming they certainly were not going to get what they paid for.

Finally, inspired by anti-war and other protest teach-ins at Berkeley, I organized a series of Archaeology "teach-outs" that would not cross picket lines. It was an incredibly challenging, exhausting and harrowing experience. There were the trivial elements such as the fact that lecturers were indeed on strike. So many of them refused to open / answer their emails, and rightly so. Yet this made it extremely hard to organize, and finally I started a WhatsApp group for strike participants. This was a breach of the personal / private barriers that are meticulously maintained for many British people, and I've been here long enough that it was very uncomfortable to intrude. I also used social media, but there was mixed uptake of that within the department, particularly among students. We didn't have access to the main university mailing lists, so I used class rosters to contact students, some of whom complained. I got "in trouble" a few times for some of these tactics, but it was important to me, now that I had a permanent job, that I was able to shield students and those on contingent contracts.

After some consultation, I decided to hold the teach-outs in our local Archaeology pub, the Eagle and Child, who instantly declared their solidarity with us. There was plenty of room, it was close to where we were striking, and was like a home away from home for many of us. There is a long history of organizing resistance in British pubs, and we were happy to continue that tradition. Yet pubs are also potentially exclusionary to non-drinking populations (though it was not mandatory to drink) and the room we met was in the second floor of a building built in 1640, no elevators so it was distinctly ableist. Also, the Eagle and Child did not open until 11:00, an hour after the strike action was scheduled (8:30-10:00), leaving plenty of time for people to wander home, particularly as it was bitterly cold and snowing most days. It was suggested that we move the venue, but no other place was particularly satisfactory, and it was left as an imperfect solution.

Given these factors, I was afraid that our first teach-out would find me and a handful of fellow lecturers having a lonely pint, but... we had standing room only. There was a hunger for action among students and staff that is refreshing but honestly unsurprising. There were talks from lecturers that included a thorough explanation of the strike, students-as-consumers, and I gave a talk on anarchism and archaeology. These were well received, but the most powerful and meaningful discussion came from using the progressive stack.

The progressive stack is a tactic used by Occupy to forefront traditionally disenfranchised voices during group meetings. I had been thinking about ways to use it in the classroom, without much luck. The progressive stack in the context of the Teach-Out was invigorating; when I led the discussion, POC spoke before white people, LGBTQ+ people before cishets, students before lecturers, women before men...to the best of my ability, at least. It relied on my own biases and foreknowledge, so it was (deeply)

imperfect, but foregrounded voices that were critical to our discussion. I had described to the group what I would be doing and moderated all of the discussion according to those terms. Lecturers who were used to being heard were taking a back seat to allow undergraduates to speak and the fierce discussion and energy that resulted was truly humbling. It was also exhausting to moderate and I found myself completely drained after each teach-out.

A veteran of the UC Berkeley teach-ins, Nancy Scheper-Hughes points out that, ironically, during these strike actions we actually do more teaching and admin than we would have done otherwise, through organized teach-outs, strategy meetings, and public outreach on the radio, print and television. While some of my colleagues were joking that they finally had time to work on that pesky research manuscript, I barely had any energy for my family after I trudged home.

The strike ran its full, exhausting course. We managed several more teach-outs, each successful to varying degrees, and we tried to expand the topics covered and increase the diversity of the teachers. The last teach-out was dedicated to bringing actions forward to the department after the strike. Because the main thing we learned from the teach-outs was not related to pensions, or even anarchist thought in archaeology, but solidarity, and that there were major grievances among students and staff. While we "won" the strike and made the pension managers back down, it is obvious that the larger struggle is not over.

By the end of the strike, we had the support of almost everyone in the department, which gave me the courage to draft a document from these concerns. This document was edited by many other people in the department and was as close to a collective voice in academia as I've ever seen. It was still terrifying as a very junior member of the department to be seen as the voice of resistance, and I put a photo of my daughter on the table in front of me to give me courage. I read our demands out loud in our first general meeting after the strike.

In it, we quoted from my colleague in History, Sam Wetherell, who stated:

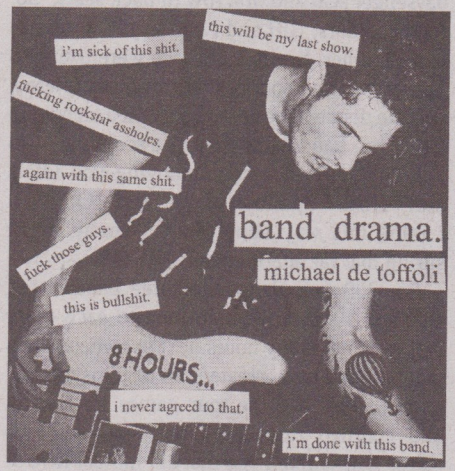
On picket lines, in teach outs and the discussions in between I have seen, the first time ever, a vision emerge of the kind of public, democratic university I'd like to work at. Tuition fees, alienated teaching practices, casualization and REF[1] should now all be on the table.

In the document we specifically targeted mental health, casualization, the heinous student visa and immigration situation in the UK, general governance in the department, and managerialism in the university. There were a series of break-out meetings in which these topics were discussed, and we are trying to address these things to the extent that we can within the department, but it remains to be seen if greater changes will resonate through the university. Meanwhile, there are rumblings that the UK lecturers will go on strike again, this time over an inadequate pay rise. But I think we all know that we cannot merely protest when the best-off among us are targeted. We enjoyed a tremendous amount of solidarity from students and casualized staff who had the most to lose and this will be utterly squandered if we do not fight for them as well.

The Teaching Resistance column is designed to provide a platform for radical, subversive teachers / educators to share their ideas and draw attention to important issues around education; particularly compulsory- and community-based education. If you are a teacher (anywhere in the world) for students of primary or secondary school ages (K-12), Community Colleges, or alternative learning arrangements such as collectivist free schools, and you want to submit an idea for a column, please write an email to teachingresistance@gmail.com

—John No, Teaching Resistance editor

[1] REF - Research Excellence Framework, a government-sponsored system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions



I believe that band relationships are just as important as any romantic relationship. Your bandmates require time, attention, patience, forgiveness, stimulation, trust, and a general sense of commitment, same as a partner. There will be many times that you'll spend more time with your bandmates than your partner and your partner will get jealous, and vice versa. They'll become a part of your life, good or bad, and if you're going to stay together, all these things need to be addressed. That's what this column is here for: to discuss why bands fight, why bands work or don't work, why bands succeed, and why bands break up. In almost every way, this is kind of a relationship column, to examine the fragile relationships that you have with your bandmates.

I very much believe that the most important aspect of punk rock, in my life at least, is community. No one is breaking down our doors trying to give us opportunities, so everything that we accomplish comes from the time and work that we put in to making this structure stand. I've always been very proud of the stance that I take with each of my bands to hook up people that are starting out. We love to give bands their first shows, partially because they have a memorable nervous energy that's always exciting (and partially because they usually bring a crowd to be honest). You form a deep relationship with that band that they'll never forget, and no matter what they go on to do and where they go, we can be proud that we made an impact on them. When our home venue closed down, we were honored to play the farewell show, and in that lineup we insisted that amongst the veterans that had made that venue, we wanted to give a new band an opportunity to play their first show. I was more proud of that than everything I've ever done in that building. This year marks our ten year anniversary as a band, and I don't think any of us thought that we'd still be here after ten years. We still write frequently, get decent show opportunities, and get to tour at least once a year, but we don't necessarily gain a lot of traction. Part of the reason I think is that the scene evolves quite a bit, so the bands that we form relationships with break up or move to L.A. or whatever, so we feel like we start over again a lot. For that reason we've never been a band that has a solid draw. We started back in MySpace days, and then made the transition to Facebook and Instagram and such late in the game, so reminding people to re-follow us with each new platform didn't give us very impressive numbers on paper. By today's social media standards, we don't look like we've been at it for this long. We attract new people and then they leave, and then work to find a foothold in the next generation, and again and again. It's a constant give and take between still focusing on the established scene that's breaking apart and trying to introduce ourselves to the new scene that's forming in its place. The venues that we establish relationships with close down, the neighborhoods that we get a solid footing in radically change, people graduate, people get married, people get promoted, people get sober, people pass away, and we head back over to square one again. It wasn't as much of a set back a few years ago, but the last few cycles have been harder to recover from. The people that you learn to rely on to

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put things in motion are always changing, and we have to figure out each new generation each time.

I don't think I'm bitter. I've met scene vets that are bitter and I don't think I'm there. I'm not defeated, and I'm not tapping out...I'm just tired. And I'm admitting that. I'm still here and I'm still able to find new inspiration and excitement in each passing year but it has worn on me. I don't ever want to be someone who looks at the landscape of the city that I'm in and only focus on what's gone but, fuck, you really should have seen this place in 2010. And I've known so many older punks that say the same thing, but their five or ten years ago is further back than mine. I think my dream has always been to live in that house that's the best basement venue in the city. Run those shows and see everyone get a chance to start out. Be a pillar in the scene. I think the reason that I want that is because it's solid and stable, and lately I've been really feeling the effects of rotating relationships. I want to be someone that looks forward to who I'll meet in the coming years rather than feeling the loss of the people that aren't here anymore. It's hard to stay motivated when you have your first conversation with a new person and you wonder how long they'll be in your life.

I've adapted a thought process of addressing negative thoughts and exploring them, trying to see where they come from to find a solution at that core. So as I've been writing this out, I've been conscious of where and when the solution will present itself. Now that I'm here, I don't think there is one. I don't think that these negative thoughts need to be corrected, I think they just need to be released every so often. This is life, this is the city that I've chosen to be my home, this is the music scene that I've chosen to dedicate my energy into, and these are the heartbreaks that come with that. I'm not bleeding and I'm not sick, but sometimes I need to just sit on the curb for a minute and gather myself. It's going to get worse. And then it's going to get better. And so on. Just like that. But every now and again I think I need to visit those graves to refresh myself before putting myself and my energy back out there. That's healthy.

Each month Band Drama will either be reviewing a universal issue that all bands face, or I'll be reviewing one of your band's issues. If you'd like a fresh perspective, advice, or just to vent in general (anonymously or not) reach out to banddramamrr@gmail.com. I've been in a lot of bands for the past sixteen years, which means that I've been in a lot of bands that have ended or failed. I'd like to think that I've grown from each, learned from each, and taken the time to reflect on each failure or success. I'm also still learning and experiencing and I always will be. So I want to share what I've learned, as well as learn from all y'all punks in bands too.

I'm in the middle of a Canadian tour. Since out-of-country cell phone service is virtually non-existent (at least on the highway between stops at WiFi oases), it's back to basics. Our choices on these long drives are more traditional than they have been in the past few years. We have books, cassettes, naps, and, most importantly, tour games.

I went on my first tour in 2013. It was only ten days, but that was plenty of time to figure out what has become an almost inviolable rule: I have to sit in the passenger seat. On that trip, I sat up front on the first day of driving. But on day two—on the drive from Rochester to Utica— I sat in the second row of seats in the van. My best friend Biff, who always owns the vans, sat in his driver's seat. The other two members tried to sleep in the passenger seat and first row of back seats. So, for two hours, Biff and I had to yell nonsense at each other. It was loud—we were trying to holler over the sound of the van, the stereo, and the distance between us. When arrived in Utica, our bandmates gave us a scolding. "Do you have any idea how annoying you idiots are? 'I have opinions about this!' 'Oh, well I think this way about that!' You're never sitting that far apart again."

So, 200 tour dates and three bands later, Biff and I still always sit next to each other on tour. That many hours next to someone in a van has lead us to create a lot of idiosyncratic games. All of these tour games have strict and codified rules because, well, we love rules. Biff will tell you that our mutual love of pinball exemplifies our love of rules, as each machine has its own long set of specific tasks and instructions. I really think, though, that inventing tour games is where our obsessive personalities shine. So let me share a few of our games with you.

"The Game"

The first game we invented is still referred to, singularly, as "the game." It was born out of our desire to show each other songs on the fly over the van stereo—always passing the aux cable back and forth. But over a few weeks, this developed into almost a competition. The rules to the Game are simple—one player pops on a song, and the next player has the length of that song to identify it and come up with a song that is somehow related and call it up. And sure, if you were just trying to win, you could play "Fuck in A" by GANG GREEN and those two seconds wouldn't give player two a chance to return the serve. But, like a friendly game of tennis, the Game is the most fun when the rallies really go back and forth for as long as possible. And the next song can truly be related in any way, but accolades are given for more esoteric connections. For example, if Biff were to play "Annette's Got the Hits" by REDD KROSS, you could retort with something simple like SYMBOLS SIX's "Ego" (a song by a Posh Boy labelmate), or "Live Fast Die Young" by the CIRCLE JERKS (as Greg Hetson played on the first RED CROSS EP). But, you could also play ANNETTE FUNICELLO's big hit "O Dio Mio," or even more abstractly, "Surfing and Swinging" by DICK DALE, famously performed in the Frankie and Annette 1963 classic movie *Beach Party*. If you can't identify the song, your best bet is to pay attention, pretend you know it, and try to rally with something that relates to the lyrics.

"Strings Attached"

One of the more moronic games we invented is called "Strings Attached." If you've been on tour, you probably know how much random garbage collects in the bottom of the van. On one particularly hot summer tour, we turned a lot of shirts into crop-tops with cut off sleeves. This left an excess of random bits of fabric laying all over the bottom of the van in addition to the usual empty chip bags, broken charging cables, tissues, unraveled magnetic tape, and crushed cans. The concept of the game is simple: tie pieces of trash together and hang the resulting line out the window of the van as it lumbers down the highway. One of the rules that makes the game more challenging is that new pieces of garbage must be tied to the far end of the line, requiring the player to reel in the line in between every new piece. The ultimate goal of the game is to touch the windshield of the car behind you, but as the line begins to dangle behind the van, the wind really begins to whip the line around and tear pieces off. At fifteen feet longer than the van, the line even begins to drag on the ground. Any longer than that and you need to design a tip that will act line a buoy—a plastic bag to catch the wind, or secretly hide a helium balloon in the van somewhere. The real beautiful part is that the game also doubles as a long overdue van cleaning. If anyone out there manages to kiss another windshield, let me know.

"That's My Texas"

A few years ago, we played a group of shows with Baltimore's QUITTER. They brought with them a game called "That's My Texas." In it, three people must each give one line of a rhyming couplet (but three lines), after which everyone sings the refrain of "that's my Texas." Each line, generally, contains four stressed syllables (and as many unstressed ones as you feel like cramming in) and must describe something that gives you a sense of comfort. The idea is that you're writing a country song in which Texas is a metaphor for anything that makes you feel at home. Texans who love country music might sing a verse like this:

Player 1: Chicken in the fryer, that's my Texas.
Player 2: A warm bonfire, that's my Texas.
Player 3: Loud gunfire, that's my Texas.
All: That's my Texas.

But we aren't from Texas and we tend to like weird and disgusting things. A typical verse in our band might sound like this:

Biff: Eating from the dumpster, that's my Texas.
John: Smooching Eddie Munster, that's my Texas.
Mike: Huffing lots of duster, that's my Texas.
All: That's my Texas.

Because there's a thinking-on-your-feet aspect to the game, you can lose by dropping the beat or failing to find a rhyme or near-rhyme. Mostly, though, it's just fun to sing gross things with your best friends.

"The 'Now That's What I Call Music' Challenge"

As a band, we can be a bit obsessive. At some point, we decided that we should start listening to entire discographies straight through instead of skipping around to the good stuff. This is usually a regrettable decision. Sure, you might want to show someone the original version of "Ratt Fink" as performed by ALLAN SHERMAN. It's a shame that it's on disk three of a six disc complete discography titled *My Son the Box* (of which disc six is actually incredible, so stick it out if you're playing along). It's almost like we dare each other to listen to total garbage for hours on end just to see who breaks first.

Playing aural chicken with complete discographies led us to one of our least favorite games: the "Now That's What I Call Music" Challenge. If you're unfamiliar, *Now that's What I Call Music* is a series of compilations of Billboard top 100 songs. The series originated (at least in the USA) in 1998, and there are 67 volumes. The game is simple: pop a volume on the stereo. No one is allowed to look at the track listing. Anyone in the van can call for an individual song to be skipped, but if a song is skipped, you must listen to the next two songs. Since you aren't looking at the track listing, almost every song generates debate on whether it will be skipped, but the fear of what is next usually means that we listen almost never use a skip. Sure, you might want to skip the *Rugrats* version of "Take Me There," but maybe there's a seven minute K-CI AND JOJO jam up next. Do you risk it?

"The 'Freebird' Game"

AGENT ATTITUDE introduced me to two things: fika (a Swedish coffee break that involves dunking sweets), and the "Freebird" game. There is only one rule to this game—if anyone in the van puts on "Freebird," the driver must take his hands off the wheel when the solo section starts. Officially, the rules state that you can't put your hands back on the wheel until the song is over and whatever happens. If you want to play by just seeing how many seconds you can make it, that might be a little more sane. The only problem, for us, is that Biff is really good at driving with his knees, but that loophole is questionable at best. Can I get a ruling on that?

—Nicky Reynolds

Women and butches

In my last column, I briefly apologized for my column in 424. My column, in which I tried to talk about white supremacy, instead was itself racist. But an apology without any action is meaningless bullshit, so here I will lay out steps that I will take to make amends.

I plan on tackling the racism in my column in two distinct ways. First off, I am educating myself further on white supremacy and racism. So far, I've been reading *White Fragility* by Robin DiAngelo, which offers a clear and distinct framework around white supremacy and the difficulties white people have in confronting their ways of reinforcing it. (In case you're wondering, it's really good so far.) This book will not be the only way I will educate myself, but it is my first step of many to come. Secondly, I've recognized that the column represents a need to change my ways of thinking about myself and my place in white supremacy. So in order to change my way of processing that, I will join a white anti-racist affinity group so that there is guidance along the way. To further assist creating a change of thought, I will also begin cognitive behavioral therapy. All of these steps should help minimize any further harm I may cause.

But to ensure that I don't cause more harm during this time, I am taking a hiatus from my column. I can't foresee myself writing another column for at least half a year during this time. I'm taking this step not only to reduce harm, but also to give myself more time (however small it may be) in order to more thoroughly address the harm I've caused. I will come back at some point, and whenever I do, I also plan on always having other coordinators read over whatever columns I write in the future.

Until next time,
Joan

This month, I was supposed to go back to Olympia for ten days so that my band, REXMANNINGDAY, could record our first full-length album. Unfortunately, we broke up, as being a long-distance band is really difficult and expensive. To quote Sadie in the break-up email thread, "I think I have to relegate this one to the ANALS of history and be like, 'Damn, that demo is sick. Those shows were fun. Those jams at Flophouse were happy. We rocked.'" And while it's sad that we won't be able to record the songs we worked hard to write, I can't help but feel relieved that I won't have to spend the money on recording and traveling to Olympia. I've been putting off finding a steady job here in San Francisco in anticipation of having to travel this September, but I'm now able to try to find that sweet employment...yay?

My feelings about that band breaking up are also wrapped in my emotions about leaving Olympia, and about the hurt I've felt about distance and silence from an old friend group after a love (lust?) triangle explosion happened last summer. It's been hard to talk or think about, but I see replications of this community-breaking pattern happen so often that I can't help but be constantly reminded of it. It makes me think about ways that girl-

hate systematically divides women and queers in a capitalist society, why it happens, and how it regularly happens in punk and radical communities.

With these themes on my mind, I've been understandably excited to have picked up Silvia Federici's newest book, *Witches, Witch-hunting, and Women*, to review for *Maximum*. As a big fan of her 1998 book, *Caliban and the Witch*, I was thrilled to see she had written a book revisiting the same themes but applying them to capitalist colonialism today. This column is not a formal review of either book—especially since I'm only half-done with the new one—but I'd like to quickly do my best at explaining what Silvia Federici's themes are so I can then relate them to my own personal life. I'd also like to note that her writings aren't about witches or witchcraft necessarily, but about how patriarchy within capitalism uses a demonization of witches (i.e. people who engage in anti-capitalist behaviors) as a tactic to disempower communities and instill capitalist regimes. *Caliban and the Witch* is a text focusing on the tactics used to gain primitive accumulation during the transition from feudalism to capitalism during the 14th and 15th centuries in Europe. "Primitive accumulation" was a term coined by Marx to refer to the origins of capital wealth (land, bodies, labor, etc.) as specifically gained through violence, war, enslavement, and colonialism. *Witches, Witch-hunting, and Women* elaborates on how witch-hunting continued to be and is still used as a tactic to instill capitalist colonialist regimes.

Also, I'd like to note that Federici's use of the word "women" is seemingly most often used to refer to cis-women, I assume, because of how regularly she makes assumptive comments about reproduction. It's some unfortunate cis-feminist shit, though in her newest book she at least acknowledges that transphobia compounds misogyny, and violence towards transgender and gender-nonconforming people is too a replication of capitalist order. Her main argument is that anyone of any gender or sexuality who is making choices of empowerment that do not uphold capitalist values is targeted and demonized, especially in the beginning phases implementing capitalism in a new colonization of a people.

I very rarely read theory because I tend to find academic texts super confusing, but I appreciate the easily-digested way that Silvia Federici writes. *Caliban and the Witch* might be the only theory-based historical non-fiction I've ever finished and fully understood. In this most recent book, *Witches, Witch-hunting, and Women*, there is a beautiful chapter on the history of gossip, and how it has evolved to have a negative connotation in female and queer friendships. If you've been reading my earlier columns, you must know that I love gossip and do not believe that it's inherently mean or divisive. I think that talking about people and personal experiences is an important part of storytelling and being part of a community. So, as you can imagine, I've been feeling really validated by Federici's chapter addressing the history of the manipulation of the word "gossip." On the evolution of the word's meaning, speaking very specifically about Western European communities, Federici writes:

> *Through [the history of 'gossip'] we can follow two centuries of attacks on women at the dawn of modern England, when a term commonly indicating a close female friend turned into one signifying idle, backbiting talk, that is, talk potentially sowing discord, the opposite of the solidarity that female friendship implies and generates. Attaching a denigrating meaning to the term indicating friendship among women served to destroy the female sociality that had prevailed in the Middle Ages, when most of the activities women performed were of a collective nature and, in the lower classes at least, women formed a tight-knit community that was the source of strength unmatched in the modern era. Traces of the use of the word are frequent in the literature of the period. Deriving from the Old English terms God and sibb (akin), 'gossip' originally meant 'god-parent,' one who stands in spiritual relation to the child to be baptized. In time, however, the term was used with a broader meaning. In early modern England the word 'gossip' referred to companions in childbirth not limited to the midwife. It also became a term for women friends, with no necessary derogatory connotations.... Gossip today designates informal talk, often damaging to those that are its object. It is mostly talk that draws its satisfaction from an irresponsible disparaging of others; it is circulation of information not intended for the public ear but capable of ruining people's reputations, and it is unequivocally 'women's talk.'*
>
> *... This conception of 'gossip,' as we have seen, emerged in a particular historical context. Viewed from the perspective of other cultural traditions, this 'idle women's talk' would actually appear quite different. In many parts of the world, women have historically been seen as the weavers of memory—those who keep alive the voices of the past and the histories of the communities, who transmit them to the future generations and, in doing so, create a collective identity and profound sense of cohesion. They are also those who hand down acquired knowledges and wisdoms—concerning medical remedies, the problems of the heart, and the understanding of human behavior, starting with that of men. Labeling all this production of knowledge 'gossip' is part of the degradation of women—it is a continuation of the demonologists' construction of the stereotypical woman as prone to malignity, envious of other people's wealth and power, and ready to lend an ear to the Devil.*

I bring up the demonization of gossip and the capitalist strategy of degrading female and queer friendships because we [in the US] unfortunately live in a capitalist, colonialist, white supremacist society, and all of our learned behaviors stem from and are perpetuated by this culture. Unlearning racism, colonialism, misogyny, transphobia, etc. is lifelong, daily work that is difficult, especially if you're in a situation that challenges you emotionally. I was excited to read this gossip chapter because I've been trying hard to make a case for writing about punk gossip within *Maximum Rocknroll*. But, more pressingly and in the foreground for me has been thinking about how capitalist patriarchy actively pits women and queers against each other. I think about how, after my love / lust triangle drama last year, the girl and guy were still communicating and working on their relationship while the girl wouldn't communicate or share space with me. I think about how I didn't take her need for solidarity through holding the dude accountable seriously, instead focusing on how I felt villainized by her and her friends. I think about how at the center of my actions was a need to be validated by the dude, to remain on good terms with him. I imagine her actions were similarly centered, since we both disposed of our friendships with each other pretty rapidly, and have since still not reconnected with any kind of relationship. I deeply regret the way things went down in that situation for everyone, and I share it in hope that it resonates with anyone else who's struggling in some sort of triangulation. I'd share more, but like I said, not today and not here.

But all of this above is what I'm looking for in some sort of gossip section: themes validating that love and sex are not separate from punk or politics, that talking about people and events isn't negative or "idle talk," and that the story-telling of life builds community and is inherently anti-capitalist. Again, figure out whatever way you need to make it OK to write about people. Use pen names, no names, or just ask permission. My argument is: why

not write about real life? What is the meaning of personal business? What is the privatization of life? I thought we all agreed that no man is an island or whatever?

I will leave you with some happy gossip. This past weekend, I went to go see the rare Bay Area performance of JABBER at an Oakland Pride celebration. My friend, who plays in that band, has been having an up and down time with a crush. Classic and rough. My friend wrote a JABBER song about their crush on this girl, and that song ("Tempting and Exhausting") was released with a music video to promote their upcoming album, *Jabber Forever*, and the music video was released around the crush's birthday earlier this summer. At the Pride celebration last weekend, the crush was there, and I was so excited to witness my friend sing this song about their crush *to* their crush. And I'm extremely happy [worldwide] to report that the two of them *confessed the depths of their feelings to each other at the show!!* Eeee!! I literally squealed at the show when my friend told me. Sorry if this is embarrassing for either of you, but I don't care, that story is noteworthy and exactly the kind of punk gay gossip I'm trying to write about. And just think about how much more fun it would be to read about it if it were written about by the people involved, with all their emotional weight and details in the mix.

Might I remind you that you know where to submit this shit to. Email, snail mail, text message, whatever. It isn't derogatory, it's exciting. Xoxo Gossip Girl

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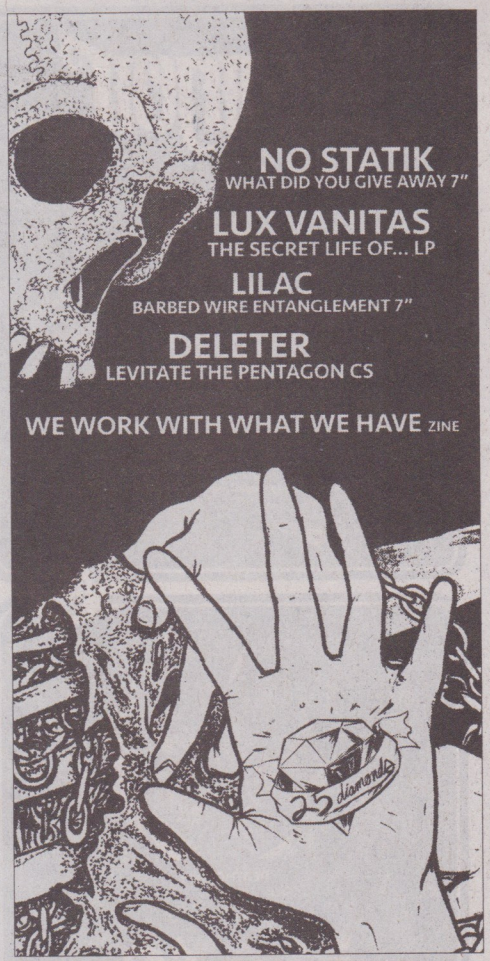
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CASUAL HEX

Interview by Sharon Frajlich.

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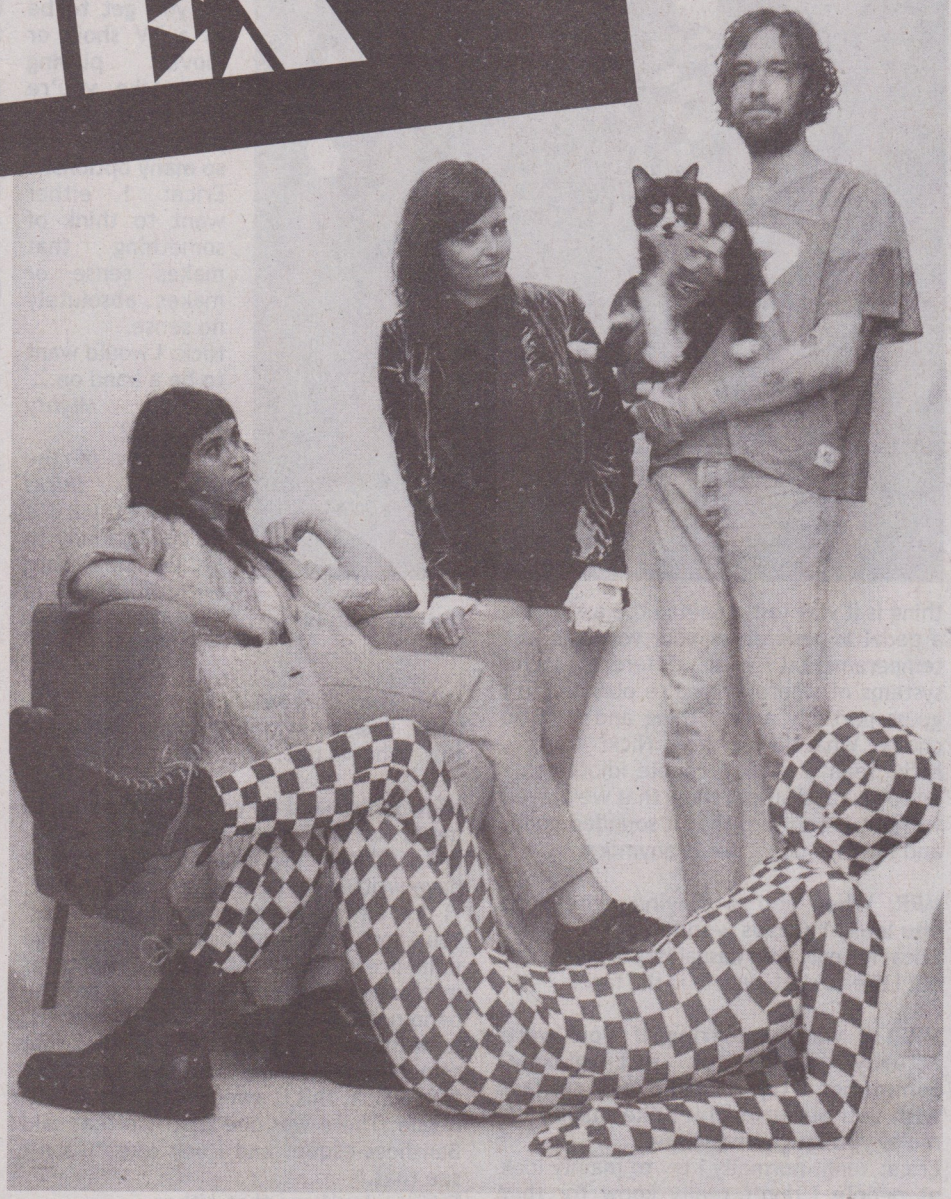


Seattle's Casual Hex has been a band for three years. They shared some intimate details ahead of their fall European tour.

MRR: You've been friends for almost six years. Before knowing each other, were you playing in other bands?
Jessie: Erica and I played together, but it was never really a band.
Nick: But before we knew each other?
Erica: Jessie and I have known each other since middle school, essentially. We had guitar class in high school.

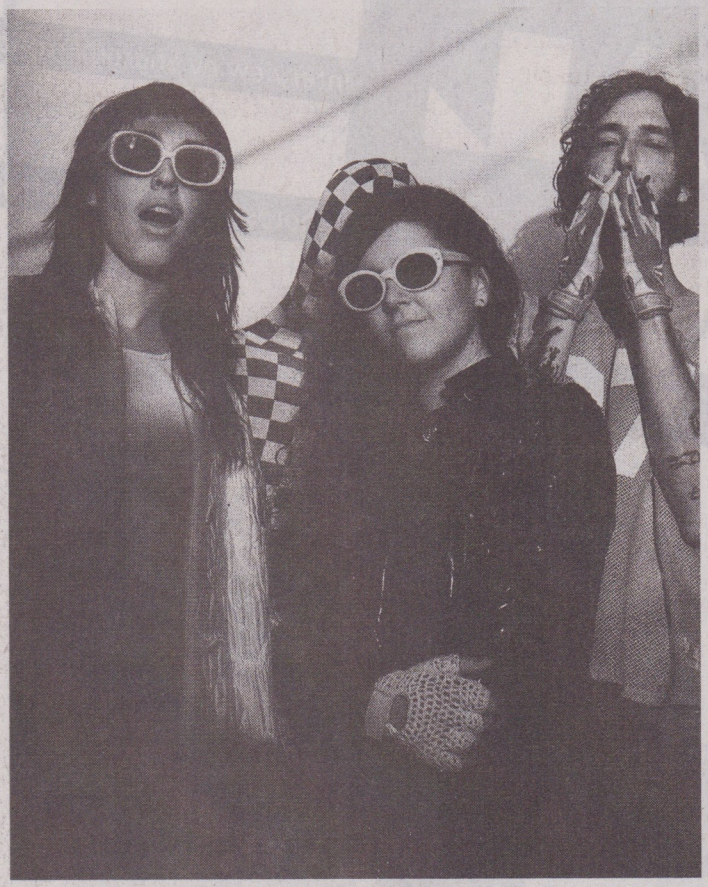
MRR: First instrument was guitar?
Jessie: I had a bass, a guitar, and a drum set in my house. That was in middle school. And I would just play Blink-182 covers by myself. *[laughter]*
Erica: Funny thing is I was doing the same thing.

MRR: What about you, Nick?
Nick: I played in two bands in Florida before I moved out here.
Erica: I hate knowing that you were in other bands before us. *[laughter]*

MRR: Let's get sentimental. What do you think made you guys click and stick with each other?
Jessie: I think we were all on the same level of music knowledge. Maybe Nick was a little better. But I don't know. I think it just made it fun because we were kind of bad but had no expectations.

MRR: And now?
Erica: We fucking *shred. [laughter]*
Jessie: It was just fun because we were learning at the same pace. We were just having fun.
Nick: It was low pressure. And we all wanted to play music.

MRR: A controversial change question. What made you lose the octave down vocal pedal? The fans want to know.
Erica: It was mainly a stylistic choice. We thought it would be cool and kinda weird. I didn't really know any bands that were using that. And it was a good way to mask my actual voice. I think I was less confident then, so it was a nice little buffer. But it was a creative decision, just also a buffer. And then I had my pedal bag stolen out of the car in San Francisco. So we had to play the show, and I didn't have my pedal. And I heard it dry, and a couple people commented about it. And I was like "oh, that actually sounded cool."
Jessie: Yeah, you could actually hear what you were saying.
Erica: And then when we recorded, I guess it's just the most recent album because the one before had it. Nick still wants it, but I feel like the absence of the pedal sorta feels like the next evolution of the band. So yeah, it was a major decision. The other



thing is it was just a pain in the ass. Using a pedal in general for your vocals is just temperamental with different sound systems of wherever you're playing. So I guess partially a lazy thing and stylistic choice. What do you think, Nick?
Nick: Yeah, I think a couple idiots came up to you at a stupid show that we played without it and said that it sounded good, and now we don't use it anymore.

MRR: When you're playing, where do you look? I always wonder.
Erica: It's only with Casual Hex in particular, but I like to stare people in the face.

MRR: I was wondering if you were actually staring or just glazing. Sometimes I try to avoid eye contact with you because I feel like maybe I'll make you laugh or fuck up.
Erica: Yeah, normally I try to mainly look at people I don't really know for that exact reason.

MRR: Did anyone else watch the latest season of *Twin Peaks*?
Erica: I watched most of it.

MRR: OK, so you know that at the end of each episode they had a band play at the bar they all go to.
Erica: Oh yeah.

MRR: Yeah, like one episode they had Nine Inch Nails. And I also feel like they did this a lot in the '80s and '90s. Like I'll always remember the Mighty Mighty Bosstones in *Clueless*. There were always live bands in movies. So you get to be in a TV show or movie playing live. Like you're the band at the prom. There are so many options.
Erica: I either want to think of something that makes sense or makes absolutely no sense.
Nick: I would want to be a band on...
Jessie: *Mighty Ducks. D2.*
Nick: Any of the *Mighty Ducks* movies. I think it'd be really funny to be on *Curb Your Enthusiasm* but in the context of Larry David hating your band.

MRR: That'd be really funny.
Nick: Like he was like "Who listens to this? What is this?"

MRR: What band do you get compared to most, and does it irk you or flatter you?
Erica: I don't know how to say this. People have written certain things that I'm like, "I don't think we even sound like that." You know, I've heard people say we have influence from the A Frames. Which is interesting because when we started the band none of us even knew the A Frames. It wasn't until a year into us playing that someone showed me them and I was like "Oh, whoa, this is awesome."
Jessie: There was one write-up that said Banshees-esque, and I was like "I don't see that."
Erica: I don't see that either.

MRR: You haven't made a music video, do you think you will?
Erica: We're supposed to. We're just trying to figure out when to do it.

MRR: Do you know what song it's going to be for?
Nick: Maybe all of them! *[laughter]*
Erica: Yeah, we'll do a full visual album. But yeah, we're supposed to do the video, and it's going to happen, there's just a lot of stuff going on. And timing is hard.

MRR: Do you have an idea of it? You don't have to tell me, obviously.
Erica: We're definitely, let's just say, incorporating the checkerboard one-piece. That's as far as I'll say.

MRR: Well, since we're talking about it: what's with the love of checkerboard?
Jessie: She loves ska!
Erica: Yeah, it's sort of a nostalgic thing for me. Brings me back to my roots.

MRR: OK, so you don't like checkerboard for NASCAR or ska reasons?
Jessie: When Erica first got into it, I literally just Google searched "ska band" and did a screenshot of all the checkerboard blazers and was like, "Do you not realize this, or I don't know what you're going for." *[laughter]*
Erica: See, my goal here is to redefine checkerboard. *[laughter]*
Erica: Our genre of music is checkerboard punk that isn't ska. I think Liam from So Pitted coined that term for us.

MRR: A friend made a joke about this once, so I'm going to ask about it. Nick doesn't do fills. What is something you two hate on the bass or guitar or vocals that you don't want to include in your sound?
Erica: What I dislike...I mean I'm pretty open, down for slides, palm mutes, all the things, but no blatant shredding, I guess. No masturbatory shredding. *[laughter]*
Jessie: Yeah, no beer bottle on the neck. *[laughter]* Don't do it.
Erica: Maybe I can shred, I just only do it at home.

MRR: Just to make sure that you can do it.
Erica: Yeah. Just to be clear, I can't shred, but one day I will. You just wait and see. *[laughter]*

MRR: And then you'll put it in your music. *[laughter]* After you write the lyrics, do Nick or Jessie ever make suggestions?
Jessie: No. Nick wants some yee-haws in there. *[laughter]*
Nick: I used to request, just one song, I wanted there to be a "yee-haw" kind of in the style of that song...Who's that song by that's like "woohoo"?

MRR: Oh right. We all know the song. Who is that?
Nick: Do I look it up?
Erica: It's in my head.

MRR: So you wanted a yee-haw in that style?
Erica: I would do it just for fun at practice for them. For him. *[laughter]*
Jessie: Yeah you'd do it for so long it was like "yeeeeeeeee." *[laughter]*

Erica: It was good filler lyrics.
Jessie: I usually don't, I mean I am paying attention to the lyrics when you first come up with them, but not really. So I don't fully hear them until we record, honestly. *[laughter]*

MRR: Biggest music-related injury or bummer?
Nick: Ooh, car accident on tour.
Erica: Yeah. The first tour that any of us had done. And yeah, we got the whole run down. We got the car windows smashed and got in an accident.
Jessie: In San Francisco and stuff stolen. And then was it the next show? No, it was two days later we played in Vancouver.
Erica: Luckily it was the last show of the tour, but yeah we got in a car accident.
Nick: I was in bed for a week.
Erica: I was also.
Jessie: Car was totaled, we spun around.
Erica: But remember we had such a good time on tour that it almost didn't even, or maybe it was more so the window getting smashed that I was like "whatever, we're having so much fun it's fine."
Jessie: I mean the car totaled... *[laughter]* Nick had to wear like a kid's neck brace the next day.
Nick: But I was happy to come back from tour and not have to work.

MRR: The highlight. You got a bigger car, so I guess there's that.
Jessie: Yeah, I had insurance. But we were all okay and the other person was okay.

MRR: I feel like because everyone asks about the music scene here I put in this question about the music scene: a lot of DIY spaces have closed down and others have opened. With this ebb and flow of keeping the DIY scene going, do you see a change in it?
Erica: I feel like things have closed and not a lot has been opening, though. Once Office Space closed, it seemed like there was a revitalization of the punk scene in the U District with some houses, specifically Pizza Palace. I feel like that's probably my favorite place to play right now because it's just like you play there and are guaranteed there's gonna be people there because everybody just wants to hang out. But it feels like it's kinda dying.
Jessie: Well yeah, and a lot of the ones that closed down were like established for a while. So all the ones that are opening up we don't really know how long they're going to stay open.
Nick: I've been hearing about house shows at places I've never been.
Jessie: Maybe we don't even know, then.

MRR: How has living in Seattle influenced your music? Do you think living here specifically creates a sound?
Nick: Yes. I think living here, especially in the beginning, I wanted everything to be darker sounding. Probably a little bit to do with the weather.
Jessie: And there's a lot of music scenes. We don't really want to play the same music everybody else is playing.

MRR: Your latest album, *Zig Zag Lady*, is on Spotify. And one of your related artists is Led Zeppelin. How do you think that happened?
Jessie: I hate that.
Nick: Is that true?

MRR: Yeah, I went on your Spotify and that is a related artist. What's up with that algorithm?
Nick: No way.
Jessie: Maybe just a name in the title?

MRR: Gotta get a bio in there.
Erica: Oh really? I don't even know how to see that.
Jessie: The bio should just say related artists: Led Zeppelin. See related artists. *[laughter]*

MRR: A question from a fan: I know you guys share an art space and you've been thinking about getting a pet—a chameleon in specific. What has being in a band taught you about caring for a pet?
Erica: That maybe we shouldn't get it. *[laughter]*
Erica: Well, it's not only being in a band that would help us know how to take care of pets, more so that we've all actually lived together too. So what have we learned about each other? Who will kill it first?
Jessie: Who's going to feed it the live bugs?
Nick: Who's going to take care of it? Who's going to show it the most love?
Jessie: Who's going to teach it tricks?
Erica: Who's going to be a good influence?

MRR: So basically, it would be Nick's chameleon?
Nick: It'd be sick as fuck.
Erica: I mean, animals and people are drawn to Nick. Probably should just let him. He's a Taurus, he's kind of nurturing.

MRR: Yeah, you'd always carry the chameleon on your shoulders. That'd be cute.
Nick: That would be cute.

MRR: It would clean your ears for you.
Nick: We gotta get one.

MRR: OK, I'll leave you with that. Please get a chameleon.

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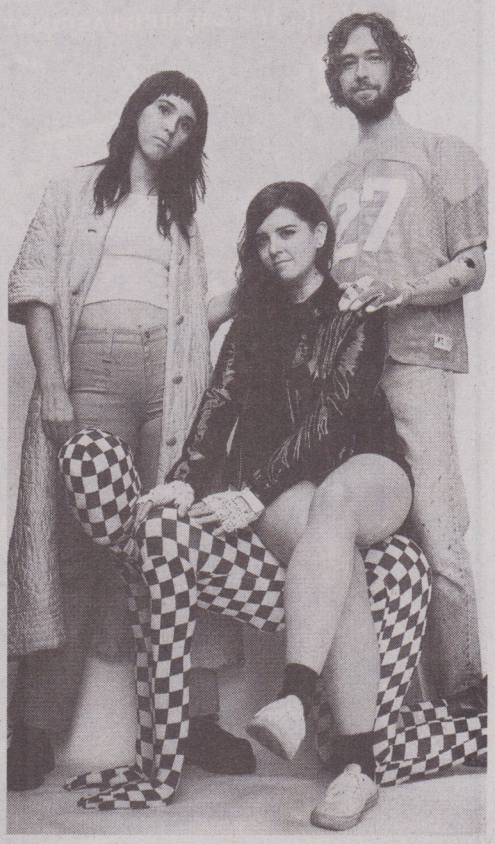

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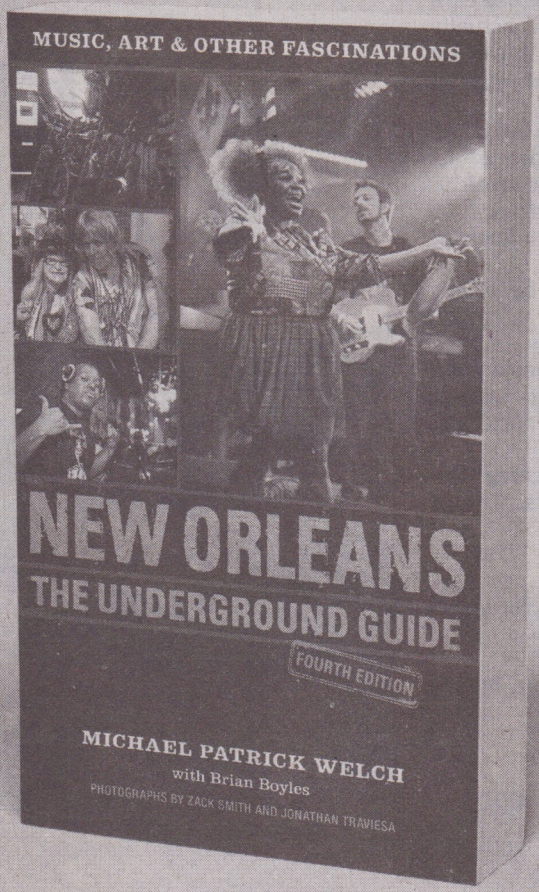

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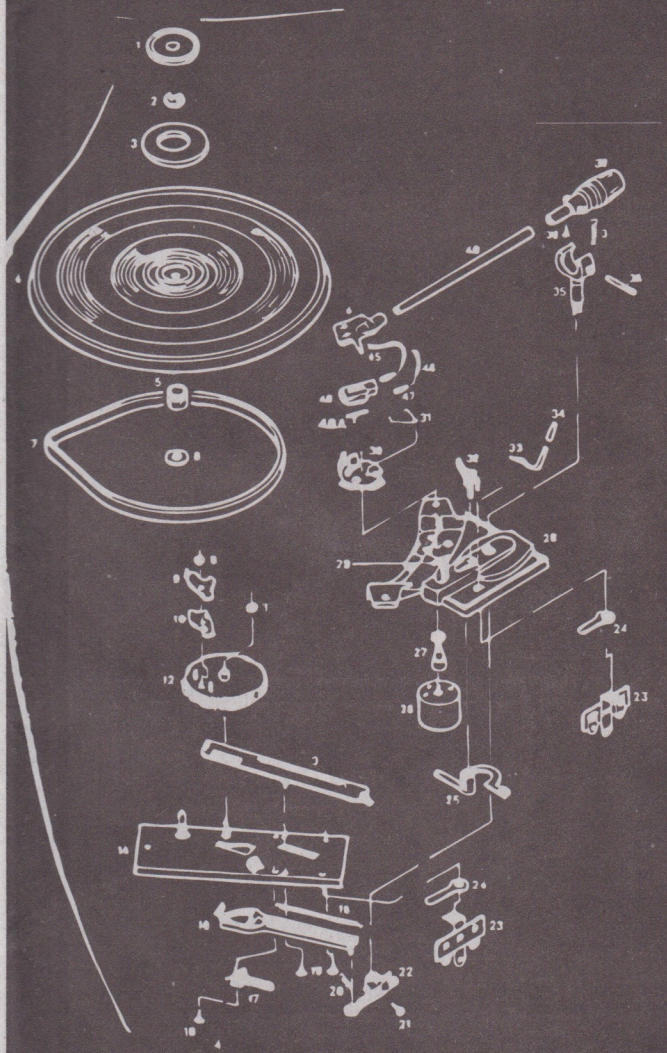
Since 2013, ever/never Records (please note the intentional lowercase) has released a bounty of highly rewarding punk-informed music.

ever/never



Be they bar-raising entries from established artists like Obnox and Dan Melchior or quizzical offerings from newer or lesser-known entities like En Kernaghan Band or Gad Whip, ever/never releases tend to warrant more consideration than much of the surrounding punkish musicscape—immersive sounds for chaotic times. I really wanted to see how ever/never's sausage was made—to find out exactly who was responsible for releasing all these wonderful, puzzling records. After a few years(!) of informal electronic small-talk and a couple of false starts (my fault), the dirt (mud, really) has finally been dished. Read on for a detailed survey of ever/never's wares and motivations, as well as some wise-ass jabber on the complexities and joys inherent with releasing some of today's most vital DIY sounds.

Interview by Mitch Cardwell
Photos by Bonnie Nabors & Josh Gordon

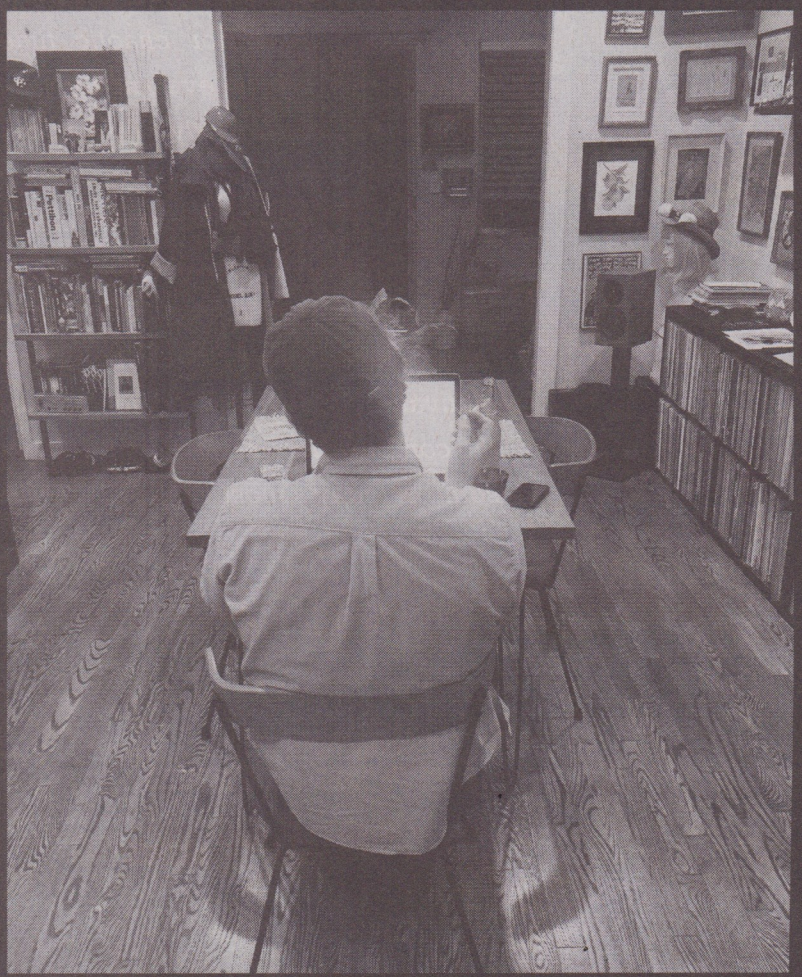
Design & illustration by Nirzar

MRR: I suppose we should begin with demographic particulars. Who are you? How old are you? Where are you from? What's the oldest thing in your fridge right now? Paint your picture however you like.

Who am I? My name is Josh Gordon. I run the independent record label ever/never. Currently in my mid-30s, an interesting time in life, where every week one might learn of new physical limitations and hopefully develop a new mental ability to put them off for another week. Been in Manhattan for the past fifteen years. Before that, there was a short attempt at college in Boston, which was quickly abandoned. Happened to grow up in a tiny little suburban town about 30 miles north of NYC, spending a lot of my salad days taking the train to the small, intermediate city, White Plains, and then graduating to NYC. Was certainly not a bad way to grow up. The oldest thing in my fridge is probably the fig jam my girlfriend's mother left here about a year ago on her last visit. Neither of us seem to have the courage to throw it away. Hoping this interview acts as the impetus to the tossing of the fig jam. Other than that, I'd say I'm just another guy in a blue shirt you might see on the subway and think nothing of.

MRR: Are you a musician or strictly a record man?

Wouldn't necessarily say I'm a musician, as I am not trained, nor have I taken any lessons. I hammer away at a guitar in freak duo Maximum Ernst with Erick Bradshaw H. (of Sophie Mol, Golden Era, Cyanide Tooth, and Family Curse). Our self-titled CD, featuring the excellent human and wonderful saxophonist / trumpeter / etc. Daniel Carter (of William Parker Trio, Ghost Moth, Matthew Shipp Quartet, etc. etc.), was very well-received by Tom Lax of the legendary label, Siltbreeze. That was really cool for me. We have a new cassette from a live show in Brooklyn, again featuring Daniel Carter, about to drop on ever/never. I also play drums in a Rock Art Noise Pop (not my words) trio Consolidated Plastics. We were lucky enough to record a WFMU session for Thomas Stork's great show, Undancing In The Dirt, which was released on cassette by Greatdividing out of Australia. It can easily be found online to stream for free, which I highly recommend. A few attempts are currently underway to record two 7"s for Greatdividing and ever/never. I definitely do not consider myself to be just a record man.



MRR: Is ever/never your first label?

There was a label before ever/never, but it never really got off the ground. It was a good learning experience, but there really isn't much else interesting to say about it, unfortunately.

MRR: What was your motivation for starting ever/never in 2013? Was there a specific project that got you motivated or were you simply looking for way to get into the process?

A little bit of both, I would say. My main motivation for starting a label was actually more of a long simmering desire to get involved in the (sub)-underground music community in some way. It's not an exaggeration to say that it freed me to think in ways I could not have fathomed fifteen years ago, and like those before me, I had to get involved to try and pay back all that inspired me in some way. Maximum Ernst didn't exist yet and Consolidated Plastics were not yet ready for the bright lights of Cake Shop. I narrowed it down to two viable options for me: go to shows, take some photos, and start a photo zine, or start a label. As my photography skills are fairly lacking and my day job affords me a little extra money, a record label seemed like the best route at the time.

MRR: Wait. You mention a day job...What might that be?

I work in the wholesale jewelry business, on what I consider to be one of the last true gritty, charismatic NYC streets: 47th St. Unfortunately, even this street is not immune to gentrification: a giant new Sephora has opened up on the corner, which severely depresses me. Hopefully 47th St. maintains a touch of character and continues to be no kinda place for women or children. My day generally consists of a bit of buying / selling / trading of various baubles, however I am saving the juicy bits (murder, betrayal, etc.) for a book I am working on. Maybe ever/never will get into the book publishing game one day...

MRR: Now let's walk through ever/never's true beginnings.

Obviously there are a ton of labels (ESP, Siltbreeze, Drag City, Flying Nun to name a few) that I look to as inspiration, but previously mentioned label Greatdividing out of Australia, and its head honcho, Andrew, provided the true spark and infrastructure inspiration. His very relaxed schedule, barely-there PR and all these strange 7"s that seemed to fall from the sky had me really intrigued. I thought "This seems fun...I could do this!" Yep, that old

adage. We first established contact through the (in)famous message board on Terminal Boredom, trading scans of some old Jim Shepard (V-3, Vertical Slit) interviews. Eventually, I asked him if he would be interested in helping me get ever/never off the ground, and being the nice guy that he is, he agreed to release e/n-001 with me. I'm a part-time masochist and he a full-time sadist (I kid, I kid), we decided to finish his Exiles From Clowntown trilogy with the triangle release ("No Original Thort"). It must be noted that the name "Ever/Never" itself is the title of a Deep Brain Thrombosis track, taken with permission, of course. DBT share members with Exiles From Clowntown and fellow e/n recording artists Glam Fail and Dickhead Rescue. It ought to be released as a 45 with two different versions on ever/never someday.

MRR: I recall some photos that featured your debut Exiles From Clowntown single affixed to poles and pillars scattered around NYC (and presumably other locales). What's that all about? Viral marketing, arty goof, or an intentional trashing of what you created? I once stuffed a greasy, grilled pork chop into the semi-sealed shrink of a record...

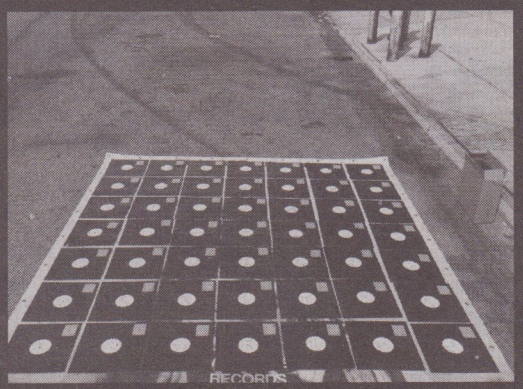
Ha, good memory! Nice to know someone is paying attention. I'd say it was a touch of both. It would be insincere to say it wasn't viral marketing, as it was physically placing records in the public sphere, hoping someone would take notice and do a little free promotion for e/n. Unfortunately, beyond having some fun placing them around the city and taking some great photos, it didn't really have the effect I was hoping for and no one really caught on. It was a bit of an arty goof as well. The record was already in a hole punched sleeve, exposing parts of the record itself, cheekily calling into question the value of the actual record as a sound-transmitting device vs. it being an objet d'art. I think it furthered that idea...Leaving it outside, prone to the elements and potential further physical degradation. Plus, I'm personally always on the lookout for and love finding things "in the wild," so the packaging presented a perfect opportunity to play a part in potentially brightening up or ruining someone's day. I can certainly understand and appreciate the compulsion to stick a greasy pork chop into a record though. While not a pork chop, I have stuck some weird shit into packages in the past. I did throw one of these Exiles singles into (on top of) the trash, though. The idea was ultimately more related to hopefully getting a trash man into weird rock than turning the record into a dumpster baby. I remember Yellow Green Red's review of the record suggesting something to the effect of shooting the next record out of a cannon, which I thought was a pretty good idea.

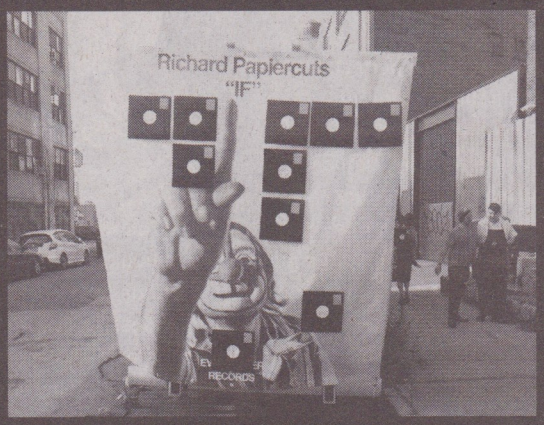
MRR: ever/never's bands aren't exclusive to hometown locale, but as you established footing, you seemed particularly attentive to NYC stuff: Degreaser, Ballroom, the Wilful Boys, a couple others—uneasy acts, underbelly stuff. Is this sound, these bands and your corresponding release methodology indicative of your experience living in NYC? As a slow and easy Left Coaster, running a label there seems especially daunting.

Well, I suppose you are what you eat and as a New Yorker, I was hanging out a ton at Death By Audio (RIP), where I happened to meet Tim Evans from Degreaser through a mutual friend. With the severely unfortunate passing of Brendon Annesley of Negative Guest List, Tim was looking for a new label for Degreaser's third record. I believe Erick Bradshaw H. (who will probably be mentioned a million more times and shall from here on out be known as EBH) floated the idea of Tim and I working together. Plus, they were playing out a ton and the new songs ruled, so it just kind of fell into my lap (thankfully). I still think that record is a massively underrated psych rock masterpiece and fell a bit too far under the radar due to it being one of my first releases. Through Tim, I met Kristian (Degreaser bassist) who had another band, Ballroom, that routinely stopped and started with different members, but solidified around the time Degreaser went on a hiatus. Through Christian I met Steven Fisher of the Wilful Boys, who was also drumming in Ballroom. With all these connections, I would absolutely say these bands and sound did reflect an exact moment of my life and personal headspace, certainly playing into and reflecting my unfortunate misanthropy and generally bleak outlook towards humanity and life at the time. Not much of my mentality has changed since then, but making these early e/n records just felt right and natural, where one thing led to the next. It's most unfortunate that Degreaser and Ballroom are now defunct and both main guys are now back in Australia doing different things. Before Tim left, I was lucky enough to release his excellent solo record, Wretched Wings, so he must have had a good enough experience with e/n on the DeGreaser LP. Soliciting bands across the world with only one or two releases under your belt and no name recognition can be fairly rough going, but I was incredibly lucky (does one make their own luck?) to be friends with and be in the same orbit as some great artists and musicians, some of whom had enough faith in me and the idea of e/n to release records with me. Without them taking chances and believing in me, I have no idea what e/n would even be today. I should also mention that Richard Papiercuts and Russell Richards of Code BMUS were extremely helpful in the beginning, giving me a little boost. As I've said elsewhere, it takes a village to raise a record label. As people started to dig e/n, it became much easier to solicit bands not within my immediate vicinity and now get tons of bands soliciting me, which is quite a trip. I think starting a label no matter where you're located is an extremely daunting experience, though I am sure being an obsessive, neurotic New Yorker helps sometimes.

MRR: You mention Richard Papiercuts...Although I enjoyed the pre-RP band Chinese Restaurants and his / their preceding LP, it was e/n's "IF" that truly and thoroughly shook me. One of my absolute favorite records in recent memory, no goddamn jokin'. I've made some scant personal headway in my quest to find out more about RP, but can you shine any further light? I mean, you went so far as to release a promo remix 12" for "IF"! You obviously see them as massively as I do (more so, even).

Thanks for the kind words about "IF." I would agree that it's one of the best records in recent memory and is one of thee crown jewels in the e/n catalogue. Unfortunately, as far as shedding some light on the man himself, I must take a pass, as he prefers to remain a bit mysterious and to only speak for himself. He did do an interview with Casting Couch (RIP) a while back when he was flown down to Austin to play a show. Perhaps if you or the readers want a bit of insight, track down a copy! It's an enlightening and fun interview! I will happily divulge that he's a family man and loves Tears For Fears. I love(d) those songs on "IF" so much...They are so strong and he's such a talented songwriter. Any of them can really be turned inside out and played in myriad ways. As far as the 12" promo goes, I know where he's coming from. We both love maxi-singles and white label promos and all the record biz excess of '80s, and when you can call up people like Bim Thomas (Obnox) and Kevin Debroux (Pink Reason) to do some remixes, why the hell wouldn't ya?!? Besides being a tire fire for cash, how could someone not try to do this stuff? I even went so far as to have a massive tarp produced with the cover image, affixed it on the back of a parked truck and then taped / glued a bunch of the promo 12"s to it, covering up the image. The idea was that any passersby could be intrigued and just grab a copy, eventually revealing the cover image, all while the LP was jammin' through a boom-box. Unfortunately, we used the wrong type of adhesive...It was windy as hell and didn't quite go as planned! But I thought the image was so fun to play with: an admonishing clown with something to say on the tip of his tongue. Ya never know, maybe Mr. Papiercuts felt some kind of camaraderie or kinship with this guy—I just thought it was super cheeky and fun to try to do a really big promotion, at least for a tiny label like e/n. The money probably would have been better spent elsewhere, but that's neither fun nor interesting. Buying a promoted tweet or a Facebook ad (e/n isn't even on Facebook) seems extremely boring and uninteresting to me. I really try to give any record I release the proper treatment (promo, physical packaging, etc.).





MRR: Gotta hand it to you on this inventive art-installation promo streak! In one of our recent exchanges, you mentioned that you wanted to get Richard Papiercuts to play at Madison Square Garden.

This is subjective, but when I hear "IF," I hear massive hooks and 20,000 people screaming "Peanut Butter Is Back!" Maybe it's an alternate universe in which this is happening, but I'm clued into it. They played a show opening for Pissed Jeans a while back and somehow Kevin Debroux materialized...They did a whole set of songs in the less rockin' / more dance-oriented mode, like the version of "Sorrow Of Faith" found on the promo 12". Needless to say, more butts were shakin' than usual. If I don't believe in it, who else will? I am going to die trying to get them to Madison Square Garden...

MRR: What's it like to work with artists like Obnox or Dan Melchior? To be frank, the amount of material each artist belts out can run the risk of saturating the market or even tiring the audience...And I say that as a big fan of both.

As a big fan of both Obnox and Dan Melchior, it's been an absolute pleasure and a fuckin' trip working with them. I do not want to seem particularly antagonized by this line of questioning and I see the problem as a consumer of records—that one might get a bit fatigued with Obnox or Dan—but I am in this record releasing thing for the long haul and don't particularly care about any kind of fatigue. I know and feel that putting out great records is all that matters (to me). If Bim or Dan sent me five records that I thought were killer, I'd beg them to slow down and give me some time but would eventually want to put them all out as soon as I possibly could. Not saying it's true, but it's always possible that I have turned down several of Dan's or Bim's records and the ones I released are the ones I simply thought were the best. Really though...I wasn't living around the time, but I don't see anyone complaining about Miles Davis or Sun Ra releasing multiple records in a year, or Lou Reed releasing six or seven solo records in a three year span. People might argue about the merits of each one, but I think in twenty years, the question will be one of quality and not the whether they released too many records in too short a time. The only thing that factors into my decision is the question of "Is this record great?" Also, "Do I have the time and money to do it?" Generally, if the music is great, I find the time and money to make it happen.

MRR: Well, you certainly drive a big goddamn nail right through the heart of that line of inquiry. Consider me served. I guess what I'm wondering is if these types of concerns ever factor into your process? Both Know America and Plays 'The Greys' distinguish themselves as true high-water marks in each respective artist's discography. Hell, Know America is thee Obnox record, as far as I'm concerned. I guess with records as great as those, it's a no-brainer...But there must be some methodology there that coaxes this out, something beyond e/n simply being next in line for the discography entry. Do you think these guys simply come to you with their most adventurous material? Do they furnish you with fully formed releases or is there more of a curatorial push / pull when it comes these kinds of projects? Maybe getting too heady here, but I guess what I'm truly asking is how much of yourself can you find in e/n's records?

This question is perfectly heady, and I'm beyond stoked that you find these artists' e/n releases to be some of their best work. I think so too! Without giving up too much of the inner workings of e/n's magick involved with getting such great music out of such prolific artists, some people send me fully finished records that I dare not touch, and some send LPs / EPs / singles that I fuss about with. I like to think that I make it clear to all my artists that I respect their work immensely and

that I only have their best interests at heart. Sometimes when there is a little push and pull, I try to be as polite as possible about it and am always happy to hear the other side of an argument. As you might've noticed, I do a lot of 12" EPs. These may or may not have been LPs that I have ruthlessly shortened. All killer / no filler, ya know? That's not to say that is the case with all of the 12" EPs on e/n though. I'm also a big fan of a big sound akin to Flying Nun Records, so doing the 12" EPs are a lot of fun for me. I'm not saying that the artists consciously do this...I can't imagine what they talk about when I am not around, but perhaps they do talk. e/n may have a reputation as an adventurous and easy-going label to deal with. One that allows an artist to feel confident in sending me whatever they'd like without feeling like they have to fit into some kind of box. To put it differently, I'd say the label's "input" is about 85% ESP-Disks' mantra of "the artist alone decides what you will hear on this disk" and 15% Scott Soriano's (SS Records) mantra of "this is my label, my money, make it how I want it." Between actively working with the artists, doing the layout for several releases, working on the artwork for a few others (along with the help of my loving, patient girlfriend Bonnie, who helps with all the technical Adobe-type stuff) and generally getting into each release as deep as one should if putting out a record, I'd really like to think there is a fair amount of myself in these records, for better or worse. The fact is that these records really speak to me on one or several levels...Some people might say I have a strong personality, so I guess it's inevitable that I would drip into the grooves in one way or another. As a multi-dimensional human, it always gives me a bit of pleasure when I get demos from indie pop bands and noise rock bands in the same week. It confirms that I am on the right path (for me). I never wanted to pigeon hole myself into some genre ghetto label. I'd rather put out nothing than some sound that supposedly fits into a perceived overall e/n aesthetic.

MRR: You've done a few choice reissues: Craig Bell, Charlie Tweddle, Code BMUS...

Thanks for diggin' on the reissues, but I must correct you and say that the Craig Bell LP was actually all unreleased 1980s recordings from his time in New Haven, CT.

MRR: OK, *[ahem]* archival then...Sheesh.

Well, "I Need Drugs" and a different version of "Slow Down" were previously released on the What We Did CD. Craig's new-ish band, the Down-Fi, also did versions of "Let It Go," "America Now," "62 Hawk," and "You Be You" on CD as well. "Muckraker" is obviously better known from Rocket From the Tombs as well. Ultimately, I hope the record showcased Craig as one of America's most under-appreciated songwriters. Everyone knows Dave Thomas (Pere Ubu) and Cheetah Chrome (Dead Boys), but everyone should know Craig Bell too. He might just be the coolest guy of that whole banana bunch, if you ask me. Any guy who puts up with David Thomas and John Morton (Electric Eels) has gotta be a patient and loving man, no?

MRR: Definitely... The Craig Bell record is a very cool piece of that particular puzzle. On top of these projects just being really cool selections, they are all presented with the right amount of (re) consideration and care. Does your approach vary with these?

There is a certain timelessness to all these records and they remain just as vital today as they did then. I'm sure this helps them out a bit. The Charlie Tweddle reissue came about in partnership with Harry Howes of Almost Ready Records, who's a pal of mine. He had recently done a record of Charlie's newer recordings, The Midnight Plowboy, and he knew how much I loved it, along with Charlie's older work. Harry took me along to California to visit Charlie and we all connected very nicely. Harry was nice enough to ask me to co-release the expanded reissue of Fantastic Greatest Hits. Harry was already running Mighty Mouth Records, a prime reissue label, so he had plenty of experience with doing things properly. I kind of sat back and watched how it was all done. The textured sleeve on that one was the toughest obstacle, as it was a straightforward reissue presented pretty much without comment. Luckily, we found Charlie's tape collection and used one of them to make the bonus record that you will find with the reissue. If anyone out there likes Charlie and hasn't heard the bonus LP, they need to remedy that ASAP, as I think it's just as good if not better than the original stand-alone LP! Being able to work with Russell from Code BMUS was an awesome experience as well. They recorded their sole 12" at This Heat's Cold Storage studio, so it was really cool to talk about all that was happening at that time. That project allowed for a bit more of my input in the layout, as he sent a ton of press clippings and photos from the time, which I made into the collage insert, which was a lot of fun. I don't want to pull the curtain too far back, but the common thread in working with Craig, Charlie and Russell, besides all being super cool, easy going humans, is all these guys were excellent at archiving their own work and already had the materials necessary to make these cool records with just the right amount of information and reconsideration. Even if people think you're nuts at the time, document and save yer shit, kids! As far as future projects of this nature, the last few artists I emailed about doing some reissues all had the same answer: "Superior Viaduct just got in touch, sorry!" Unless I find some new, even smaller rocks to look under, it seems I am out of the reissue game for now.

MRR: This clearly hasn't deterred you from digging though. I mean, I consider myself relatively (borderline obsessively) "on it," but bands like En Kernaghan Band, Centre Negative, Gad Whip, and Dance Asthmatics weren't even on my radar at all. e/n's international tentacles seem to have a very deep reach. In the evolution of your label, moving from reflecting your local buzz outward to shining a light on outsider sounds from other continents, the course manages to seem both natural and exciting. Assuming you go through "phases" with listening and releasing, were these records a result of you simply start staring at a wider range of material or were they simply knock-outs you had to get out there? These are nearly all debut releases too, correct?

Ya know what's funny? I still consider myself far from "on it" even now, and I continue to find it incredibly tough to keep up with everything. I think the reason it feels so natural and exciting is that I started the label with an excellent relationship and I've tried to extend that out with every new release, whether domestic or international. I don't try to force anything. I have aborted several records if they didn't seem / feel right for various reasons. Sometimes I think perhaps this minor or overlooked aspect might go unperceived. As previously illustrated in the Degreaser –> Ballroom –> Wilful Boys progression, it was my unofficial A&R man Erick Bradshaw H. who hipped me to Dance Asthmatics, which in turn led me to Michael McClelland (Centre Negative), who in turn hipped me to some other bands Down-Undah.

I think these relationships have occurred as organically as they could, and I'm extremely pleased that that some of this feeling has transmitted through the records and is perceived by some listeners. I hope it's exciting for others since it's really fuckin' exciting for me! To be able to find all these great bands, work with them, release their music, and help shine a light on them for people like yourself whose taste I personally admire and appreciate, really makes me feel like maybe it's all worth it. Naturally, I sometimes get a bit dejected if something doesn't sell well or if I can't even get some kind of analytic confirmation that shows people are diggin' what I am doing, so getting a random email from someone saying how much they like the label or getting asked these types of questions is really nice to hear. A friend that also runs a NYC label and distro recently said to me "You seem to find all the bands that slip through the cracks," which I initially took as a slight because it's sounded like I am not getting some hyped bands or something. But as I thought about it more, I came to realize that was actually a compliment. What the hell is a sub-underground label for if not for that?!?!? It's not like I am chasing down CCTV and Sheer Mag or emailing Lumpy and the Dumpers or Hank Wood and the Hammerheads to do a record. That's not to say I dislike those bands or wouldn't put out their records, but it's just not ever/never's focus and I'm sure more than enough cool labels are calling on them. I should also mention this guy Matt, who runs the Dusted and Social Tumblr, which serves as endless inspiration and a wellspring of underground sounds. I don't think I go through "phases" of listening or releasing...I release whatever I like that comes to me at the time. I've always really liked post-punk, no-wave, fringe shit, etc. The fact I released Degreaser, Ballroom, the Wilful Boys, and Obnox in the beginning maybe gave a false impression of my overall listening habits. I love those records a ton, but those were the mostly local bands and / or friends willing to take a chance on me at the time. After releasing Obnox and Richard Papiercuts, I think those opened the door for more bands to say "Yes" after all the "Nos" I was getting previously! I tried to solicit Shiraishi Tamio for a solo record in the beginning and he said no (all good, no hard feelings), just to give you an idea of the kind of music I had / have the idea of releasing. Unlike the other vibe-related stuff, these type of genre-related choices never really factor into my decision-making. The old WFMU adage "If you don't like what you're hearing, come back in five minutes" may also apply to e/n. I'll leave it up to someone smarter than me to decipher the thread running through all the e/n records, though. I will say all these records you mentioned were in fact total knockouts! As much as I'd love to say they were all debut releases, that's just not true: Dance Asthmatics have digital and cassette releases going as far back as 2010 (talk about slipping through the cracks!). My record was actually a reissue of one of their tapes. Gad Whip had a bunch of previous digital and cassette releases, though my 12" was new, unreleased recordings.

Centre Negative was his debut record, but it was previously released on cassette. En Kernaghan was a reissue of his debut cassette under that moniker too. His discography is a bit wooly and anyone interested in his music and art should immediately make their way to his website, kelangrecords.com. But yes, ever/never holds the distinction of being all these bands' first time on vinyl...I guess seeing them as debuts is semi-appropriate.

MRR: The Proper Release LP by Patois Counselors is a total dominator, one of the finest slabs of 2018. Again, a fairly grand album by a large ensemble of punks, reaching for heights a lot of bands don't dare shoot for...they nail it. How did they come into the e/n orbit?

A total dominator indeed! The first time I heard it, I said to the person sitting next to me "This is gonna be Top Ten all over the place." It's so immediately good and just gets better and better with time. I had loved their previous 7" on Negative Jazz, so they were certainly on my radar. Imagine my surprise and delight to get an email from Bo (who writes all the songs, the main Counselor) soliciting ever/never to put out the record! Bo is a really nice, thoughtful guy, so to be tapped by him was one of the better emails I have received in 2018. Perhaps not the sexiest origin story, but it's true!

MRR: EPs by both Preening and Mosquitoes also show e/n continuing to push in 2018. How is the remainder this year and 2019 shaping up for e/n? Are you happy and fulfilled with e/n's present? Optimistic about e/n's future?

ever/never will continue to push hard as ever into the second half of 2018. Releases for the next few months include Ragtime Frank's I Know Said The King 12"EP, which includes one of the most insane "Bo Diddley" reinterpretations you'll ever hear. It just came out on Sept 7th. After that, there's a 12" EP collaboration between Spray Paint and the Rebel, which they recorded in a day in Belgium while on tour together earlier this year. There's also another lovely LP from Quietus slated for upcoming release, which I'd recommend to the more mature readers out there. And hopefully if the cards fall just right (looking promising!), a new Richard Papiercuts 12" EP will make it out before the end of 2018, which will hopefully further confound and / or satisfy the hordes. Moving into 2019, e/n has an LP marking the return of the Chinese Restaurants(!) and a Headroom 12" EP. There are also some other interesting releases still in their larval phase too. Not to sound too optimistic in this horrible moment in history but I'd say I am extremely happy and fulfilled with e/n's current state. It seems like more and more people are grokking what I am trying to do, which is really cool to see. I am far more optimistic about the future of e/n than I am about things in general. Ultimately, I am constantly bewildered and awed and thankful to be able to work with great bands and people and to watch e/n continue to grow beyond anything I ever imagined.

Keep abreast of ever/never's goings-on via the following sources...

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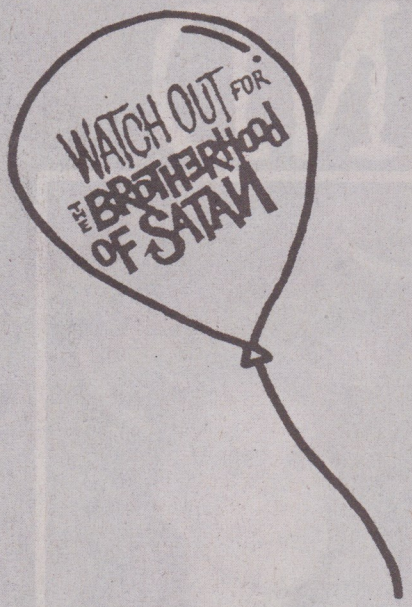

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WARWOUND

Interview with Ian Glasper of Warwound (and author of The Day The Country Died: A History of Anarcho Punk 1980–1984, Burning Britain: The History of UK Punk 1980–1984, *and a hell of a lot more!) by Jim Saunders. Photos by Steve Cotton, Timm Sonnenschein.*

MRR: So I guess we ought to start at the beginning—who were Warwound and why are they back together again now?

Well, to cut a very long story short—or as short as I can *[laughter]*—Warwound were a short-lived UK82 style punk band from Lichfield, which is just outside Birmingham in the UK, who were together for a few years in the very early '80s. They did three demos and a handful of gigs, and then their bassist Damian went off to play guitar for the Varukers. After he wrote and recorded the—classic, it has to be said—*Another Religion Another War* 12" with them, he formed Sacrilege, who did some legendary demos and the amazing *Behind The Realms Of Madness* 12". They also did two great metal albums, but split up soon after, without ever attaining the dizzy heights of that 12" again. And Damian kind of vanished off the scene for the next three decades, really. But fast forward to 2015, and Relapse remastered and reissued *Realms*, complete with a brand new Sacrilege song, so everyone—including Damian, I think—was hoping the band would play live again. That wasn't to be, however, but by then Damian had a yearning to play again anyway, and Profane Existence had just released the old Warwound demos on vinyl, so he figured he'd resurrect that band instead.

MRR: How did you end up on bass then?

I'm still not sure! *[laughter]* Damian started out as the Warwound bassist, but then moved to guitar, and established a unique style all his own, so he wanted to stay on guitar. I don't think any of the other original Warwound guys wanted to do it or have continued playing, so he recruited his old mate from the Varukers, Rat, on vocals, and Rat suggested Stevie on drums, because he was playing with him in the Vile.

Not sure who threw my name in the hat, but one of them had seen me play and knew I could handle the fast stuff.

MRR: It's very different from your previous bands though.
I'm not so sure it is. I mean, yes, it's very different to the melodic hardcore band, Thirty Six Strategies, I was in at the time, but over the years I've played punk in Decadence Within and Flux, hardcore in Stampin' Ground, Betrayed By Many, and Freebase, thrash metal with Suicide Watch and Sun Of The Endless Night... Warwound has elements of all of that. In fact, this feels like the sort of stuff I've always wanted to play; it's certainly closest to the music that turned me onto punk in the first place back in 1981. There's a picture of me from early 1983, at the very first gig I did with my first band, Ammonia 77, and I've got a Varukers t-shirt on; there's another pic from the mid-'80s of me on a hunt sab wearing a homemade Sacrilege t-shirt too...So it feels like it's gone full circle and I might have actually reached where I've been going for the last 35 years! *[laughter]*

MRR: Should people still equate the Warwound sound with the early Eighties?
Well, there's always going to be that UK82 edge to the sound, but we said from Day One that we didn't want to just trot out all the old material and cash in on the interest in Damian and Rat's other bands—we wanted to write a brand new album and bring the Warwound sound bang up to date, and that's exactly what we've done with the *Burning The Blindfolds Of Bigots* LP. There was no way the four of us were just going to be content rehashing the same three chords ad infinitum, and we all brought three decades worth of musical and life experience to the table when we were writing that last album—and what came out is what came out. Some people do come up to us and say we've lost the vibe of the original Warwound demos, and of course we have—they were knocked out in a few hours by teenagers who could barely play, on cheap instruments they'd begged, borrowed or stolen...And more power to them, because they captured a glorious moment in time. But for us to go in and try to recreate that would be calculating beyond belief, and I like to think we've captured something totally different, but just as special. The feedback from the album has been amazing too, so I think that most folk who heard it got where we're coming from.

MRR: I know you still get annoyed when people call you a "covers band!"
That's only happened once or twice, and it's because we play two or three classic Sacrilege songs in our live set, and sometimes a Varukers song or two off *Another Religion*, but it does annoy us, because a covers band plays songs that other people wrote. Warwound have never played a song in our set that wasn't written by someone up there on the stage, so we're hardly a covers band. Annoyed is probably the wrong word though...more like frustrated—when people blurt off about stuff they don't really understand, based on rumours and hearsay. But that's hardly a new thing, is it? We're setting them right one gig at a time anyway!

MRR: And what about the people who think "Toxic" is a straightedge song?
They're in a minority too, haha! Not sure where that one came from, to be honest, but anyone who knows Rat and Damian will know Warwound are not sXe. That said, I've personally completely abstained from drink and drugs for the best part of 30 years, so there is *some* sXe influence somewhere in the mix, but "Toxic" is about a poisonous personality that just wants to drag you down to their level of pettiness. Everyone knows someone like that, who has a huge negative pull on everything you try to do, and you're better off just distancing yourself from such negativity if you want to actually get stuff done.

MRR: How's work going on the next album?
Slowly but surely; we all live in different corners of England, and it takes me six hours to drive to Stevie's house, so rehearsals are nowhere near as often as we'd like. But we write riffs and record demos and circulate them via email all the time, and we have more than enough songs stockpiled for the next record—we're now in the process of meeting up to jam them out and arrange them properly.

MRR: What does the new material sound like compared to the *...Bigots* LP?
Similar but not the same. Like I said, we don't want to repeat ourselves, but there's also a chemistry between the four of us that we don't want to deny, and that chemistry is manifest on the *Bigots* record. The new songs are similar in that they're raw and fast and powerful, but there's a few interesting curveballs in there too...There seems to be a bit more discord and a bit more thrash metal percolating through this time as well, but don't worry, it's going to be dark and nasty.

MRR: What are you hoping to achieve with Warwound, then?

I'm not even sure we have any lofty ambitions about "achieving" anything. We're four long-in-the-tooth punk rockers who vent our spleen thrashing out angry music...If we get to the end of a tour without either dropping dead, getting arrested or losing a fortune, that's an achievement! *[laughter]* We don't have any illusions about us changing the world any more, but if we can demonstrate that UK punk is still relevant and maybe have a positive influence on a few people we meet on our travels, we can lie straight in our beds at night. We're also determined to prove that "older" punk bands can still kill it when they play live; I hate watching veteran bands that just limp up onstage and dial in a pedestrian performance. We give it our all, and play every gig like it's our last time on a stage together—just in case it is!

MRR: What's next for the band?
Well, we're working on the next album, that we hope to record in the first quarter of 2019 and have out for next summer. And we have two songs each on two split EPs, one coming out in Australia and one coming out in Spain—they're modern re-recordings of old Warwound songs, played the way we play them now, just to get our name out there and tide people over to the next album really. We'll be back playing in Spain next March, and hopefully hitting Australia and New Zealand for the first time in April. And we're coming back to America at the end of November for eleven gigs up the West Coast with Plight.

MRR: How do you fit in your writing as well? Because you have a new book out, right? And it's not about punk!
Yeah, I don't sleep too much! *[laughter]* The new book is called *Contract In Blood* and is a history of UK thrash metal, and whilst it *isn't* about the punk scene like my first four books, it isn't that far removed either. A lot of the thrash bands in the book—like Onslaught, English Dogs, Anihilated and Hellbastard—came from or crossed over with the punk scene, or the late '80s UK hardcore thing that I wrote about in *Trapped In A Scene*, and the whole vibe about UK thrash wasn't dissimilar to the punk aesthetic—it was primarily underground, rooted in fanzines and tape-trading and DIY gigs, and it was fast and noisy and anti-social. It always struck me that UK thrash was criminally overlooked, despite there being some great bands and some great albums; it was misunderstood by the labels that signed those bands up, and short-changed by the UK press who were fawning over the Big Four coming out of the US at the time. Either way, it's an interesting underdog story that fascinated me, and I wanted to document it.

MRR: Whatever prompted you to start writing these huge books? They must take over your life?
Yes, they do; I've written five so far, and each one has consumed me for the best part of two years...and if you knew how little I've made off them, you'd appreciate that this really is a labour of love. But I just try to write the books I would want to see on my own shelves—and hope that other people will be as excited about them as I am. When I wrote the first book—*Burning Britain*—I was writing for *Record Collector* magazine, and I kept getting sent all these books on the Pistols and the Clash to review, and I started thinking, "When is anyone going to write a book about *real* punk bands like Discharge and Crass...?" In the end, I stopped waiting and started writing!

MRR: Of all the different genres of UK punk you've written about, which is your favourite?
Oh, anarcho-punk, without a doubt. Not only do I love that music so much, but the lyrics really helped shape me into the person I am today.

MRR: Are you working on your next book already?
Actually, right now I'm helping a friend from Greece edit and proof his forthcoming book on the international crossover scene of the '80s—so it's full of bands like Excel, Sacrilege BC, Attitude Adjustment, COC, DRI, Ludichrist etc.—mainly because I loved all that stuff, and I just want to see this book get out there. That's being published by Cherry Red next spring

And then I'll start on my next one, which will probably be about the last twenty years of post-Millennial punk in the UK. So—normal service will resume with the next book! *[laughter]* Actually, once I've done that one, that will bring the story I want to tell about the UK punk and hardcore scene completely up to date, so I'll be out of stuff to write about...

MRR: Are you still working on the lyric book you told me about once?
Yeah, that's ticking along in the background. I'm still not sure whether it feels a little self-indulgent, like some sort of vanity project, but it's basically every lyric I've written for every band I've been in since the early '80s. Of course, each song was inspired by something, so each lyric will be accompanied by an explanation or story, or even some reminiscing on events at the time of writing, plus loads of fliers and record covers and gig pictures...the idea being that it would paint a picture of the UK punk and hardcore scene from a personal perspective without bigging itself up to be an autobiography or anything pompous like that. The verdict's still out on it at the moment; I might just keep it for my grandkids to read in private!

MRR: Any last words of wisdom?
Just thanks—*sincerest* thanks—to everyone who's supported either me and my books or Warwound and our music—we never take any of this for granted. Please come check us out and say hello in late November / early December if you're on the US West Coast!

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12/1 San Diego @ The Tower Bar
12/2 Las Vegas @ The Dive Bar
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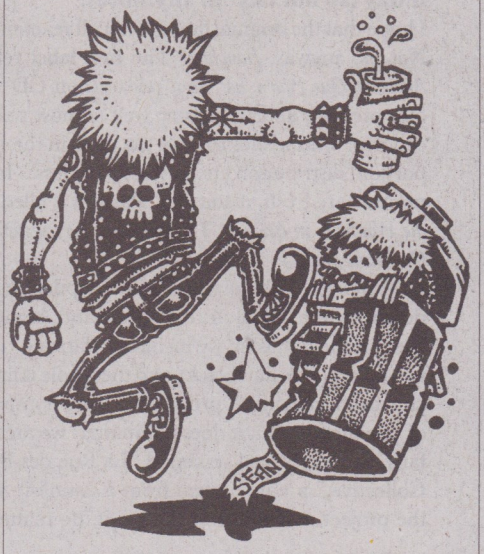

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Starting a DIY punk label nowadays is a matter of passion. But starting a DIY punk label to release on vinyl regional records that have been particularly successful locally only? Hats off. The label Je Me Souviens ("I remember") volunteered to take up this challenge by releasing recordings from the province of Quebec that have marked the history of local punk but mostly unknown outside... No KBD stuff, but just punk recordings that inspired the label owner and many others. Marc-André Pilon (the brain behind the label) is determined to correct the situation so that these groups receive the international attention they deserve.

Interview conducted by Jean-Philippe Tremblay.
Photo by Claude Germain.

MRR: Being the motto of the province of Quebec ("Je me souviens"), does the name of the label confine you in a specific niche?
That's for sure...but that's exactly the desired niche: reissue of Quebec underground music on vinyl. The goal is to focus on cult albums that have never been released on this medium, albums that are released on CD or K7 in their original form.

MRR: You are a young label. What's your reasoning for releasing music from local groups who are known mainly in Quebec, given both the expensive cost of production for their release in vinyl and knowing that many of their original fans are surely reactionary Conservative voters today (so not buyers anymore)?
I hope that the original fans are not all reactionary conservative voters... Not us, anyway. *[laughter]* The first label release, Les Bons à Rien's *Advienne Que Pourri* LP (first released on CD / cassette in 1993) was a 500 pressing and went very well (almost sold out). I am especially a collector who wishes to have the discs in the hands, the whole business portion, distribution etc., interests me less... In this sense, as long as the projects are fresh, it suits me. Passion is filled. *["Les Bons À Rien" means the Worthless in English. The band was very inspirational in the '90s for many Québécois punks.]*

Moreover, with the upcoming compilation LP, which consists of '80s demos by the old Montreal punk band Amnésie ("Amnesia"), we paid a lot for the remaster, we include a "fanzine" of twenty pages, there are two colors (blue and black), and the whole is limited to 300 copies, so the chances of making a "profit" are rather non-existent because of the cost of production. But it does not matter: we are a beautiful gang, a dozen fans who have been renamed "La Rue des Bâtards" ("Bastards Street Collective," a name taken from a Amnésie song), who micro-finance the project and who want to see it, no matter its commercial success.

MRR: Why choose such groups?
Les Bons à Rien was really the first impetus behind the project. I wanted to get their first full recording (*Advienne Que Pourri*) in my hands on vinyl. Nobody did it. So, I said to myself, "I'm going to do it." I contacted the guys and they were interested (which even led to a reformation). In 1995, when I was a high school student, the band came to give a concert near my home in Dorion (a Montreal surburb). It knocked me to the ground. A few months later, I joined a band as a drummer and they (Les Bons À Rien) really helped us to find a place in the local scene. We can say that this show (and this record) have changed—positively—the trajectory of my life. Re-releasing their LP in vinyl form was also a way to honor them. As for Amnésie, at the launch of the *Les Bons à Rien* album, Claude, the singer of Amnésie, graced us with his presence. It was enough for Daniel Gastro (Les Bons à Rien singer) to get carried away and decided to pay homage to the group that had influenced him. We then talked about the project around us, and we quickly found a core of fans who wanted to see the project come into the world. I am very happy to see their two demos (from '88 and '90) on vinyl, because they are really hidden treasures of Quebec punk that deserve to be more known (and recognized). Amnésie are also one of the pioneers of French-Canadian punk in Quebec (they started in 1983), which did not stop them from trusting me to organize a concert of them in '97, when I was seventeen years old. I thank them for this trust, which has lasted another 20 years.

MRR: How is the promotion for such a type of album in such a market in 2018? In the '80s and '90s, we could count on the fanzines, independent radios, small distros and other means which, today, are in extinction...What are your arguments of persuasion so that shops and distros agree to carry your releases?
It's really via the internet. We started a presale / crowdfunding for first release (thanks to musiqueindependante.com), which has created a network of nearly 200 people. We also had some coverage in the media (newspapers and TV). In terms of fanzines, there are sites, like Barricade Punk, that have taken over. For the shops, it is certain that we must almost leave the discs at the cost of production if we want a

decent price for the fans, but we can manage if the presale is good. All of this has completely changed. But I would not be ready to say it's dead.

MRR: Knowing that you work and that you have daily occupations (family, music, etc.) what are the effects of the label on your quality of life?
That's another story. *[laughter]* I teach full-time, I'm young dad with two children (the youngest at four months at the time of writing), I play in my own rockabilly group (Black Moon Boys), who are releasing an album in the fall, and I write books. So do not expect production to be very high or very fast. *[laughter]* But for the second production, we had a beautiful group involved, and I feel that there is a succession among them.

MRR: What do you get from the punk movement for the operation of your label?
I imagine we do this in the only way we have always known: we put it ourselves from A to Z, without subsidies or anything. It's the only way to do it for me.

MRR: How do you go about creating connections with the backers (i.e. the Bastards Street Collective for the Amnésie album)? Will crowdfunding become the norm to finance projects? If so, does this pre-suppose that in-store sales are less and less profitable?
Exactly, the presale / crowdfunding is really what allows us to make our expenses. With the first release, 70% of production costs were covered before the disc went to the store, which really helps. Me, I find it great that it is the fans who finance the project, and that I am a simple coordinator. As long as we have the disc in the hands at the end of the road! As for the "Bastards Street Collective," they are fans of Amnésie, old and current punk bands members like Daniel Gastro, Martin Racine (from the '90s antifascist Oi! band Impact), Sylvain (from the Montreal Oi! band Prowlers), etc. True music fanatics who want to see this project born, out of love for the band. Of course, if we had a working capital that allowed us to release the discs without organizing a presale, it would be simpler (and much less time consuming). But the concept would be less "grassroots" too.

MRR: How do you try to stand out as a "provincial" label in a world where almost everything is happening virtually via social networks (with the tons of information that comes with it)?
I do not know. The boundaries of "province" are not the same in my mind, I guess. *[laughter]* We sold 10% of the Les Bons à Rien LP in France. For Europeans who read these lines, do not hesitate to contact Abracadaboum Dikos, he has some copies left.

MRR: Are you sometimes tempted to leave the vinyl aside for other cheaper, more popular media (mp3s, cassettes, etc...)?
No, it's really a re-release project on vinyl. I'm a record collector, and I guess I'm at a stage where my passion goes through production, not just buying. And I know it's a growing passion for many people. It may just be a hype, but I do not see any problem surfing on it for the time it lasts.

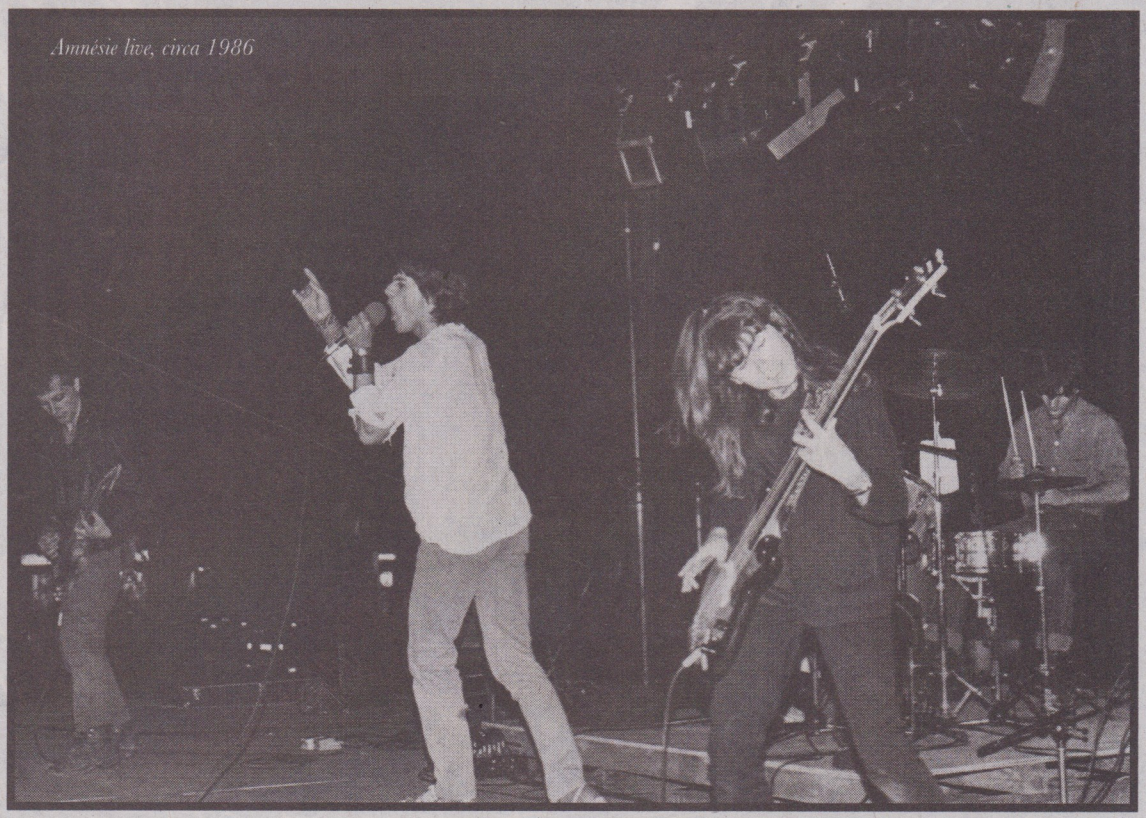
MRR: Last comments?
Thank you to all those who help to revive this music that deserves all this recognition!

nolip21@hotmail.com

JE ME SOUVIENS discography

JMS-001: LES BONS À RIEN *Advienne Que Pourri* LP (1993 / first time on vinyl in 2018)

JMS-002: AMNÉSIE *1983–1999* LP (upcoming release for November 2018, demos mostly from the '80s)



Amnésie live, circa 1986

BRING YOUR
SUBSCRIPTION
BACK FROM
THE
DEAD
MAXIMUM
ROCKNROLL
1982
TO

Fatty Cakes And the Puff Pastries

Despite what the cutesy name, and the *kawaii*, magical girl aesthetic suggest, there is nothing delicate about Fatty Cakes and the Puff Pastries. As one of the only all-woman bands left standing in the conservative epicenter of California that is Fresno, they're tough. They've had to be.

And recently, it feels like they've had to be invincible.

In the last two years, as Fatty Cakes and the Puff Pastries' profile has grown, so has the rumor mill surrounding them. Honestly, the kind of gossip they've been subjected to would crush any other normal band. But if you haven't figured it out yet, Fatty Cakes and the Puff Pastries is not a normal band.

The five-piece, femme-punk outfit has not only managed to survive in such an environment, but thrive. They've created spaces for themselves, and other marginalized individuals in their community. They've produced a self-titled album with Chicana punk legend Alice Bag that's set to release on November 9 on Emotional Response Records. They're fresh off a summer tour, and show no signs of slowing down. In fact, the controversy has probably only made them stronger.

The Grrrl Gang has gotten bigger, the statements have gotten bolder, the music exponentially more polished. But at the end of the day Fatty Cakes and the Puff Pastries remain, at their core, the same DIY band that they were when I fell in love with many moons ago, as a shiny, suburban sixteen-year old Grrrl.

They're gold, baby. Solid, feminist, gold. And they're ready to take on the world.

AMBER FARGANO - LEAD VOX // ELECTRIC UKULELE
VISHINNA TURNER - VOX // BASS
STACI LOUISE MCDOWELL - VOX // QCHORD
VICTORIA CROW - VOX // GLOCKENSPIEL
AUDREY JOHNSON - DRUMS

Interview and introduction by Kiku Gross.
Photos by Liz Cabrera.

MRR: Thank you so much for thinking of me to do this interview! Fatty Cakes and the Puff Pastries has been a band since 2013, but it feels like you really started picking up momentum in 2016. From what I can tell, meeting Alice Bag has been a big turning point for you—how does a band from Fresno get to work with an L.A. punk legend?

Victoria Crow: So, September 27, three years ago, is when we got to meet Alice for the first time and play with her at her book reading. It was *so* sick meeting her. Basically,we were playing a local show, with a band called Mutant Itch, which is full of our other homies—shoutout to Mutant Itch—and this other band from Tennessee called Nots, and Martin from Limp Wrist, and he saw us, and was aware that Alice was gonna be in Fresno and contacted her, and then she contacted Fatty Cakes.

Amber Fargano: So yeah, Martin [Sorrondeguy] from Limp Wrist is the one who connected us! I think from there, Alice actually asked us to go out and have a drink with her, and so we all went to Strummers and had a drink together, and from there it just kinda took off. She ended up having a show at the Echo right after, and we contacted her like "Hey...we're available to play that...!" and after that it kind of just snowballed into something more.

MRR: That's all super rad, but where did the jump from just playing shows with her to actually having her produce this album?

Amber: Alice came back to Fresno to play a Ghost Ship fundraiser I had organized at Tioga-Sequoia Brewery, and that's where she finally said, "I want to produce you, I want to produce you!" And of course that was like, "Oh my God! Alice Bag wants to produce us! Is this real? Is this *real?*" And she totally did it as a present to us. Just taking us in under her wing, on her own time, of her own labor—

Vishinna Turner: That was our first studio experience, even.

Amber: Yeah! And it was that fall where we were like "OK, we're here, we're ready, we're gonna do it!" And we did it! We raised the money to do it, she came to Fresno at Studio Itz to help us out, and then we we went to her in L.A. and it was a lot of like, changes, and work in the studio, and she really, really *taught* us so much more about music, like we didn't know, for the most part—well, except for Audrey who is a classically trained musician—but the main point of this is that Alice Bag is our *Fairy Punk Mother*, she has had us on *multiple* shows where we got to play with our heroes like Allison Wolfe, Teri Gender Bender, and Kathleen Hanna...I mean, Alice has connected us to friends, to icons, and really just helped us grow as individuals and as a band, and it really just comes down to that *kismet* moment, and it's all thanks to Martin.

MRR: I mean, not to kiss your ass or anything, but that growth is pretty obvious. Your new songs are like, a quantum leap above what you've produced before.

Staci Louise Mcdowell: I felt the big change for me happened when Alice stepped in and helped us see the bigger picture, like, we have something outside of Fresno, we can see the world, we can tour, we can do a record, we can do this whole thing! Alice really opened the world up to us. We learned so much in this process with her and this album and everything, it just, *ugh*, it was like giving birth to this beautiful project between these amazing women that are all *best friends*.

Entire room: *Awwww!*

Audrey Johnson: Yeah, Alice...pushed us farther than we thought we could ever go. Harder than we would've ever pushed ourselves. It was awesome. Scary, but totally awesome.

MRR: What do you mean by "scary?"

Audrey: You know, it was scary because it was just a big deal. We put a lot of money into it, and there was this professional ass studio...Alice was there...Alice was super sweet, though, like, she wasn't scary! It was just the whole situation. It just felt really real, for the first time ever.

MRR: Can we talk about Alice a little more, though? What was it like working with her?
Vishinna: Alice was super supportive and she did help us find like, notes within ourselves that felt really good together and melded with what we already had. Like she made us do vocal harmonies that we had never done before, it was mostly just Amber singing, and now there's real harmonies.
Victoria: The harmonies are fuckin' *lifted, yo*!
Staci: I just wanna say, Alice really understood us, and our band, and our sound, and I mean, we're a really unconventional band, you know? We don't use conventional instruments, we started out of a one woman act, and she really understood how to make each of us shine. We started as this live performance act, and she showed us how to shine on record. And I really value that.
Amber: Alice really taught us how to listen to each other, and how to break things down, and rebuild, and believe me, we did a *lot* of breaking things down on that record. A lot of the songs on that record didn't start out the way that they ended up being recorded. She really helped us find the beauty in those open spaces, the golden nuggets that now exist in that record.

I actually asked Alice if she wanted any rights on some of those songs that she helped grow, and she was like, "Nope! Those are yours." It was just so beautiful for someone to be so selfless and to feed our growth, and for, really, no personal gain.
Staci: By the way, if this is in the November issue...that's Alice's birthday so *happy birthday Alice*!
Amber: Yes! It's *Scorpio Season*!

MRR: Yesh! Happy Scorpio season! OK, so we've talked the production, now let's talk release. Your last EP (*Feminist Gold 2K*) was self-produced and distributed on tape by your friends at Kerchow Records, but this is your first time really working with a label. Can you talk a little bit about your journey with that?
Amber: Yeah! So once we got done with Alice and Mark in the studio, we realized we needed to search for a label. Honestly, it was a really difficult journey. We reached out to *tons* of labels, but most were full for the year. We finished recording our album in October 2017 and still hadn't found a label by the spring of the following year. We were super bummed, but kept going.

MRR: "We were super bummed, but kept going" seems to be a really big part of the Fatty Cakes story, though.
Amber: Exactly. And Kathleen Hanna actually gave us some great encouragement. We were kind of griping to her about not being able to find a label, and she said, "It's just because they haven't seen you live. When they see you live, they will sign you." So we kept pushing.

MRR: Whoa! That's incredible. So how exactly did you get on your current label, then?
Amber: Well, luckily it didn't take a show out of town! It took a compilation record. Camylle, who creates the *Typical Girls* compilation vinyl on Emotional Response Records, our current label, got us on the same edition of the compilation as Alice Bag. When we got our copy of the vinyl in the mail, there was a handwritten note inside from Jen and Stew of Emotional Response that said "If you ever want to do a record with us, let us know!" And that was it. We found our label.

MRR: Oh man, that's awesome. What's it been like working with them so far?
Amber: Jen and Stew have been so supportive and sweet—they are our biggest cheerleaders and have helped us create the vinyl of our dreams. A pink, taffy swirled vinyl dream, no less!

MRR: OK, so earlier on, Staci mentioned that Alice showed you there was a "world outside" of Fresno, and that actually brings up a great point, and I love to ask artists this question: how has being from Fresno informed your work? It's not an L.A. or a San Francisco. One might argue that it's actually pretty conservative, and that's gotta be tough for artists, especially for a band like Fatty Cakes.
Vishinna: Yeah, definitely. I think it's made *us* tougher. It's really even kind of like, created this sort of *diamond* out of all that coal. We've created this community now, where we're so much tighter and so much more rooted in our politics and how we feel,

and what we think is right, yes, but also just *actually* living this life. Because saying you're "down" with something but then not actually supporting it in action is such a *major* thing in Fresno. Like when women speak out, or queer folks speak out, or trans folks speak out, they usually don't have spaces, aren't allowed voices, and are usually shut down. So we've really had to form our own community of queer, and trans, and femme folks, and really give them a space to be empowered. It really has, like I said, created a diamond in the coal that is the conservative area around us.

Amber: Amen! And I mean, the level of misogyny that's in Fresno is so intense...like just the number of women here who are murdered by their own male partners...the percentage is so high. I've known so many people who have lost their mothers, and their sisters, and when you grow up *in* that? You grow up to hate yourself.

MRR: "You grow up to hate yourself." That's so heavy but so true. Do you think that Fatty Cakes is sort of a response to all that?

Amber: Of course. I mean, like, for me, right? The word "fat," for instance. I had to really learn how to take back that word, because, in my childhood, with my *own family*, my father's side especially was very fatphobic and told me that I didn't deserve love, that I would never have love if this is the body that I chose to have as a woman. And then growing up and having your friends stand next to you in a mirror and say things like "I am so *ugly* and so *fat*," and you're the fatter one next to them—and you're just thinking, "My God, will I ever make it out of this alive?"

So yeah, I mean, you have to find something to help you survive, and thankfully, like, music was my something, and that's how Fatty Cakes became something. I was learning about not just what it means to be body positive, but fat positive, and how to like myself, and that's really what Fatty Cakes stemmed from, was reclaiming a childhood in which I was told by kids and by my own father's mother that I wasn't worthy of life. And I totally was.

MRR: So we can talk about how you're not always accepted by the "conservative" side of Fresno, but it's worth mentioning that you've ruffled feathers in the "leftist" and artsy sides of Fresno, too. You've kind of been attacked from all angles.

Staci: I've learned that just because someone's in the same "leftist" space or the same music scene as you, that doesn't mean they share the same ethics. We've all separately had that experience, where something shitty has happened to us and people didn't have our back or support us in our time of need.

Vishinna: Yeah, it's interesting to look at old pictures and see people who have stopped supporting us once we started calling out *their* shitty behaviors. Like, when you're not addressing them, *then* they're here for you. And It's interesting, because when you call them out, it's suddenly "you're too much!" Really, women are silenced that way all the time. When women have voices about things that have hurt them, especially when they're loud, nobody wants to feel that. It's too big.

Amber: A lot of people want to talk about *how* you're communicating, not *what* you're communicating. That's always something that seems to come up for us.

MRR: It was pretty shitty, and honestly kind of confusing to see you get, well, blackballed from some spaces, but it did result in you having to create your own spaces, which are incredible, and admittedly it does feel like a silver lining, in a weird way.

Staci: Time and time again, people and promoters and performers, or whoever, will gladly support and befriend your abuser, but, yeah, blackball you, like you said, and we're just not taking that shit anymore. This is our new wave, and our new scene, where we don't take that shit.

Vishinna: You know, just because you hashtag something doesn't actually mean you actually are there for it or are going to do something about it when it actually happens. Unfortunately, I feel like that happens a lot here in Fresno.

Amber: Exactly. A lot of people are smart enough to figure out the right language to use to make you seem like the abuser when you call them out. I was calling out dudes for grabbing girls' butts at shows, I was calling out folks for being friends with neo-Nazis, and then being told to be quiet. Having lies made up about me just to get me kicked out of that community.

MRR: Selfishly, I'm really grateful that you're out here, doing that kind of work though. A lot of young, queer women of color, like myself, now have a space and a community because of you, and the hard work you were willing to put in. I definitely feel like I owe a lot to you.

Amber: We definitely believe in building community, especially now, after everything we've experienced. And it is *so* inspiring to *us* every time we see another woman doing something, creating art. And it's like, "We have to have you! Please be our friend! Come on this trajectory with us! Please!"

I mean, that's why when we have art made for us I make sure that it's made by women, and by Black folks and trans folks, because that's what you're *supposed* to do. You're supposed to share the wealth. I'm not going to play "climb the ladder," I'm going to make sure that the people who deserve it are lifted up, too. Especially when the world has told them that they don't deserve it.

MRR: And you're not just speaking to "adults" like me. You're making sure to reach out to little kids, too. I mean, when you did that Girls Rock Camp? I wish I had Fatty Cakes around when I was a kid!

Staci: We wish these Girls Rock camps would've been around when we were younger too!

Amber: Audrey, you actually have a *really* amazing story from Girls Rock camp...

Victoria: Oh yeah! About that girl who complimented your aesthetic! Because you made her feel really good about herself!

Audrey: Oh man, yeah! So these kids asked us about our style and fashion, and anyways, when it got to my turn, I felt like a nerd, because, I was like "I don't really have a fashion sense...I just like to be comfortable..." and anyways, later on after everything was over, this girl came up to me and said, "I'm so glad that you said that, because I like to be comfortable too, but that made me feel like I couldn't be in a band." And honestly, it was like the sweetest thing anyone has ever said to me.

MRR: I mean, I remember the first time I saw you live, I kinda felt the same way, like "I found my people!"

Vishinna: Wait, actually, I had that experience too! Can I share that experience?

MRR: Please do.

Vishinna: So, my first experience with seeing other women in the scene was with Audrey's band, Needy Evie. At the time, I was fresh out of high school, Audrey was still *in* high school, like playing in bars and her dad would like, have to stand in the back, with his arms crossed. And it was so inspirational! It was an all-lady band and they played like, Riot Grrrl, slash, these beautiful like, Heavens to Betsy, melodic, *beautiful* music! And it was the first time I saw an all-girl band in general, and then also like "Oh my gosh, there's people of color in this band!" you know? I freaked out! And eventually I ended up in a band and I got to play with Needy Evie and it was amazing, because I was playing with this band that I idolized so much, and just really wanted to be friends with, and now we are friends and are in *multiple* bands together, and hang out almost every week.

Victoria: Also, Strawberry Jam [Amber, Vishinna, and Audrey's former band] was like, my first experience with an all female band in Fresno! And it was so inspiring!

MRR: I love hearing all these stories because they all have this underlying theme of "some woman was doing something, and I thought it was cool, and then she invited me in."

Vishinna: I just think it's so cool that you're saying that because I mirror all those feelings you have, and it makes me feel kind of accomplished that I can give that feeling to somebody else.

Amber: I was talking to some friends, actually, and talking about how, all the things I do now, I do it for my past self. And you can't meet your past self, but you can meet the children who are out there now, and you can share those gifts that you wish you could've shared with your past self. And you can tell them that it's going to be OK. You are worthy of love. You are worthy of existence. You are worthy of expressing yourself in the ways that fit you correctly.

MRR: Can we switch gears a little bit? I really, really want to talk about your aesthetics. Knowing what the Fresno scene has looked like, and knowing that you're one of the only all-girl bands out there, I think it's *hella* cool that you have such an unapologetically *girly* and *cute* aesthetic. Was that an intentional choice?

Amber: Oh yeah.

Vishinna: It's very important to me to be this way, because as a child I used to really fight being femme. I ran with the boys, I played sports, I used to tape my boobs down...it was real. But at the end of the day, I was doing it because of misogyny. It wasn't actually what I wanted. So when I got into the punk scene, and there weren't many women, or people of color, or

trans folks, I felt like I needed to be that femme person, and be myself, because nobody else was going to be supportive of me as a person, and I needed to live. And yeah, having Fatty Cakes be super outwardly femme and cutesy...we wear flowers, sometimes we have glitter tears of green and blue, sometimes we look like aliens sometimes we dress like Sailor Scouts, we do whatever feels right, and that's important, because that opens up a door for other people to feel comfortable doing that, and I wish I had that when I was younger, that's what I wish I could've seen when I was a child.

Amber: And it's kind of a form of protest, too, because if you're not fitting into that "beauty standard," if you're not thin, white, and cisgender, then you're not really allowed to be a feminine person. You're not allowed to be sexual, you're not allowed to be anything, and Vishinna and I have the same experience in that way, where I also denied my femininity as a young person, because I didn't think I was allowed, I didn't think I was deserving. I didn't look like *that*, so why would I ever dress like that?

Virgie Tovar, a radical fat feminist, actually talks about that—how a lot of fat women experience disillusionment in their own bodies, that lack of femme ownership, that lack of sexuality, because you are told: "You are not wanted, you are not seen as anything other than gross, or disgusting, or a fetish." So that became really important to me as I got older, because I had denied myself that for so long. I mean, I've been accused by men in my scene of being materialistic, but this isn't about materialism, this is about expressing myself as a feminine person, because I have been denied that for so long by society. It is now my time to *shine*, y'all. But also, I want to open my Grrrl Gang to everyone, you don't have to be cute and fluffy to be in my Grrrl Gang. You can be comfy, too.

Audrey: Yeah! I mean, I am wearing Christmas socks right *now*.

MRR: I have to laugh a little bit, because I don't think your average person would expect this kinda radical theory to come from a bunch of cuties in Sailor Scout uniforms.

Amber: OK, but I actually have a story behind the Sailor Scout uniforms! So when I was a kid, I was always watching magical girls on TV doing magical things, and I just...wanted to be that. And OK, so one of my best memories of childhood is when some friends and I were pretending, and we were playing Sailor Moon. And I was like "I'm Sailor Mercury, because I'm nerdy, I have glasses, I have short hair..." and my friends were like "No Amber! You're Sailor Moon!" and I was like "Oh my God. I'm Sailor Moon!"

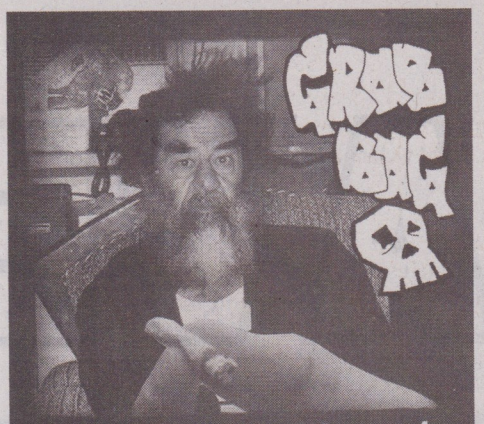
Victoria: You are Sailor Moon, Amber!

Amber: Yeah! But that's it! I can be a leader *and* I can be a magical girl, too! And honestly, I just wanted to take that little moment of empowerment and make it something bigger. And I did. And it's been such a pleasure to watch Fatty Cakes go from my solo project to a sort of community project.

MRR: It really has become a community project. And I'm super honored that I get to be a part of your community, your Grrrl Gang, if you will. Is there anything else you want to say before we wrap up?

Amber: Our self-titled debut comes out November 9 on Emotional Response Records!

California's Feminist Gold
www.fattycakesband.com



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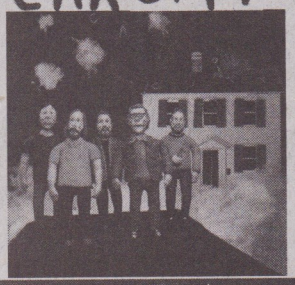

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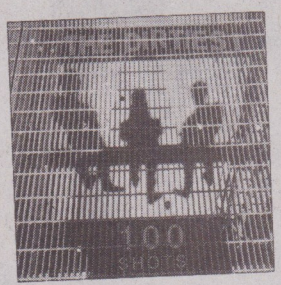

THE DIRTIEST
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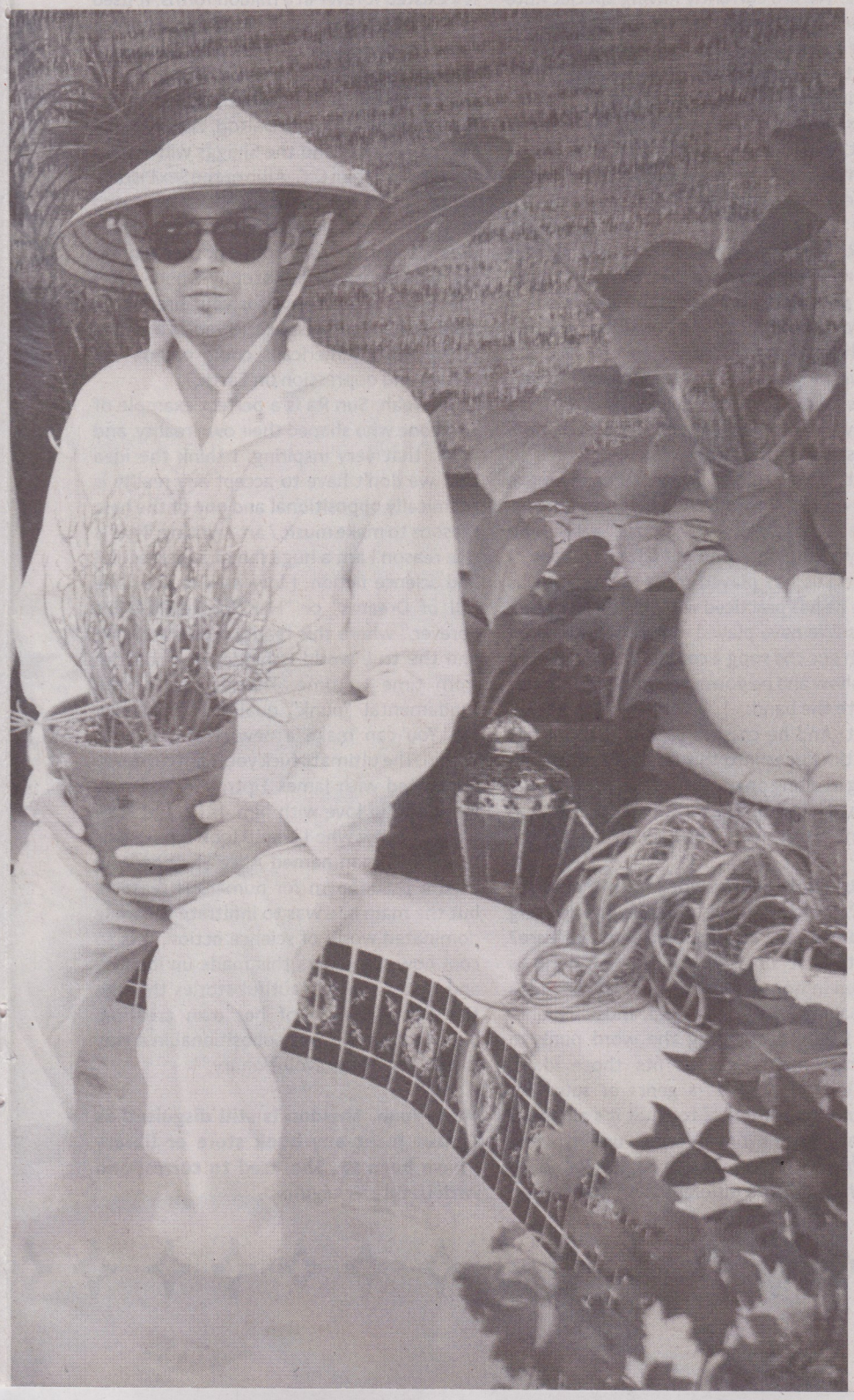


For three years now I've been watching the Lavender Flu shape shift from song to song, night to night. They have found a way to reconstruct rock'n'roll in a way that feels fresh and new. Rather than moving linearly, the Flu continually retools their old stuff while also going off in new directions. It's been a cool ride. They rant about the weird tags that get placed on them, but none of that stuff matters. Time is on their side. I just want them to keep recording because the two albums that have been released so far represent a small fraction of what a handful of people on the West Coast have been watching them get into. The four members of the Flu (Scott Simmons, Ben Spencer, Lucas Gunn, Chris Gunn) have been in a variety of other bands that made their mark over the last couple decades (the Blimp, the Hunches, Eat Skull, Hospitals, Wiley Church Mice, etc.). They have two records under their bullet belts: the self-released double LP, Heavy Air, *and their newest album,* Mow the Glass, *on In the Red. I sat down with Scott Simmons and Chris Gunn at Hot Pot City and we had a conversation about music, life, and their upcoming tour of small coastal towns only.*

Introduction and interview conducted by Chakra Mike.

Photos by Rebecca Price.

MRR: You guys are pretty fucking quiet up there on stage.
Scott: I sat at the back of the class. That's where I'm comfortable being a big mouth. I hate forced stage banter.
Chris: We decided long ago there is no reason to say anything unless you're feeling it, and I am usually not feeling it. Every now and then, if I have loaded up on chamomile tea before the gig, I might launch into my avant garde cover of Bonnie Raitt's "Something to Talk About" or maybe a bit of "Looking for a City." Once when I broke a string Scott saved the day with an acapella Doors tune that actually got some people singing along. Usually though it is really awkward between our songs. Not sorry, though. I enjoy that awkwardness. I am terribly uncomfortable on stage, so if I can share that discomfort than it becomes a real bonding experience with the five or six people that came out to see us play.
Scott: We've experimented with Jim Morrison, Vince Neil, and Stevie Nicks stage banter from time to time. Not sure how successful any of that was. We're just not that kinda band. We're not gonna go nuts on stage and jump around for people. Obviously the people who want that shit do not like our band anyway.

MRR: It does seem like a lot of the local Hunches / Eat Skull fans don't really come out to Lavender Flu shows. Why is that? I feel like your band is much more interesting now.
Chris: At our first show, one of our friends commented afterwards that the Flu was "OK" but it would never be the Hunches. That is a compliment to me. I am doing everything I can not to make music that just sounds like the Hunches. That is how you eventually end up with stuff like the Stooges album *The Weirdness*. I think it's funny, though, 'cause I know a lot of those Hunches fans are just unwilling to give something else a chance. And yeah, I like to stand as still as possible now as a protest to shallow dorks that aren't happy unless someone is prancing around on stage for them pretending to be menacing or whatever. That shit gets old real quick and getting locked into a reputation as a "*wild*" band is annoying and sets up a lot of rules and expectations. If you need theater, then go to the ballet.
Scott: We've definitely chased off a lot of folks doing the hex induction raga to open the show.
Chris: I have been known to play a pretty dangerous mouth harp with the help of my mouth harp holder, T. H. Gledhill.

MRR: Oh man, you should do that more often. Leave the guitars at home!
Chris: We are currently having special flute holders build so we can play guitar and blow flute at the same time.
Scott: All woodwinds. The Lavender Flute, coming soon. Seriously, though.
Chris: And our live version of "White Cat Heat" did not get much applause. When we mentioned it was a Godz cover I heard someone say "damn, the Godz suck."

MRR: My friends back east are always asking when you are gonna play out there. Any plans to tour beyond the West Coast?
Scott: We're just kinda waiting on one of these tech billionaires to discover our music and donate all of their money to us...
Chris: We'd love to play all over, but it's really hard to get it together to even do a few shows in the Northwest.
Scott: It took us three years to finally make it down to California and play three shows!
Chris: Luc lives two hours away and everyone has jobs and not a lot of money.
Scott: Luc has played more shows with us than he has practiced with us as a full band.
Chris: We have played many shows where I teach Luc the song a couple of hours before the show and he doesn't even get to practice it with the band.
Scott: And he crushes it! Nearly all of our free time goes into this, and Ben refuses to bring us along on his yearly trips to Scotland.
Chris: Home of Clan Gunn and the Clan Gunn's bitter rivals. The fucking Clan Keith!

MRR: What does the word "punk" mean to you? How do you see yourself participating in punk as an oppositional culture?
Scott: First off, my concept of punk is rooted in non-conformity and the DIY idea of making your own world, music, sound, etc. I hate even using the word punk to describe anything that fits those ideas. The idea of punk as a genre or sound or culture is antithetical to what it's all about to me. Putting on a certain uniform and playing a cartoon version of the Ramones or whoever is no different than meeting up at the park on Sunday morning and doing Civil War reenactments with your friends. It's a costume party. Which is fine. Knock yourself out. But don't act like it's rebellious or something, it's revivalism.

MRR: Grey Heads!!
Scott: I don't like to call stuff punk because it's existed forever in a million forms. It used to just be called rebellion. Or you were a maverick or outsider. The Grateful Dead were punks when they started. Lee Perry, Marcel Duchamp, the Godz, Hasil Adkins, etc.
Chris: For sure!! Karen Dalton, Wendy Rene, Peter Grudzien, and the Shaggs will always be "punker" than G.G. Allin or the Sex Pistols.
Scott: Sun Ra was "punk" as fuck. He created his own world. Walked around the street dressed like he was from another planet. He had this whole philosophy where outer space was a metaphor for your dreams or mind to go. For Ra, space served as a utopia where Black Americans could escape the racism and oppression on Earth.
Chris: Yeah, Sun Ra is a perfect example of someone who shaped their own reality, and I find that very inspiring. I think the idea that we don't have to accept any reality is cosmically oppositional and one of the best reasons to make music / art / writing. That is one reason I am a huge fan of supernatural and science fiction. I love stories like "The Hill of Dreams" or "Her Smoke Rose Up Forever," where this reality is just a dream and the true world is hidden and invades from time to time. That is one of the fundamental "punk" qualities of making art. You can make a new world to exist within. The ultimate fuck you. I am currently infatuated with James Tiptree Jr. and may in fact be in love with him. If I could time travel, I know who I would look for. He was really a woman named Alice Sheldon who used a pseudonym for numerous reasons, but the main one was to infiltrate the male dominated world of science fiction. It is so cool how she enters this made up identity and writes these beautiful stories through this fictional man of her own creation. Super subversive and oppositional in a way that is not "fake revolutionary."

MRR: Yeah, Sheldon is still disguised as Tiptree Jr. at any book store or library I have been to. She used to correspond with Ursula K. Leguin.

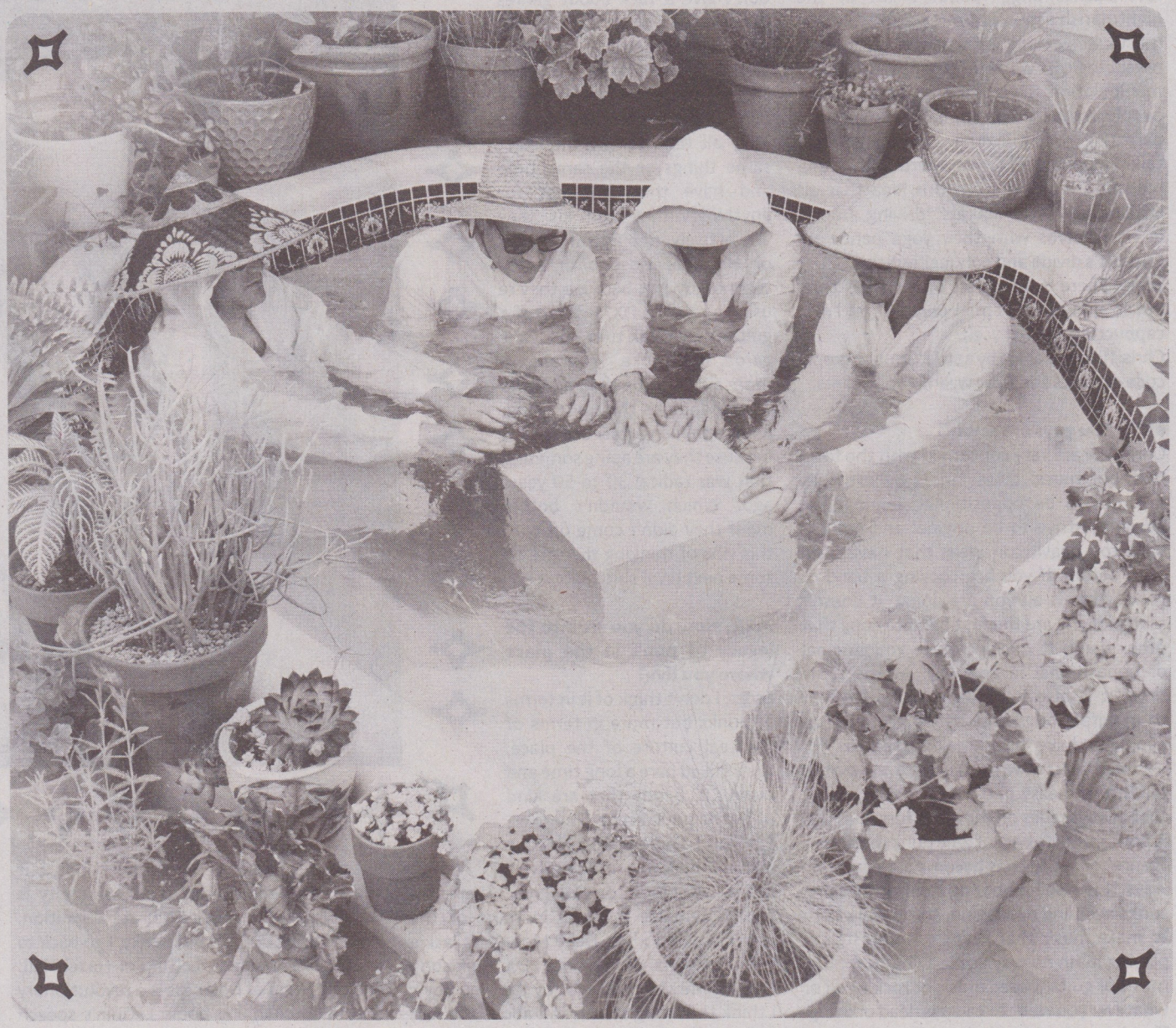
Chris: I am really interested in people who do their own thing, and that is what I see as truly oppositional culture. The word "punk" has become kind of watered down and useless, but the punk spirit is always alive and hides in other places. One of the ways that our band is oppositional is by abstaining from the "punk brand" and making our own world to attack with. We are in opposition to rules and scenes and genre tags, and this applies to everything from how we live to how we construct our records. I used to hate feeling like I didn't belong anywhere (school, work, sexuality, punk scene, garage scene, music scene, life), but now I embrace it. The true outsider has all sort of freedom.

MRR: What draws you to music as your mode of expression?

Chris: I am a firm believer in the absolute power of music as a healing force, as a force for change, as a place to actually live and exist within in a culture that is predominantly an uncaring vacuum. True creativity is true life. There is power in writing lyrics and music that invades and influences minds in subtle and emotional ways, and that is much more believable to me than someone yelling *fuck the president* or whatever. That is not shocking, and it's pretty obvious. Instead, you can focus your energy on writing original music that will travel time and enter the mind of someone twenty years from now. That is powerful.

MRR: That sounds like some Gurdjieff bullshit.

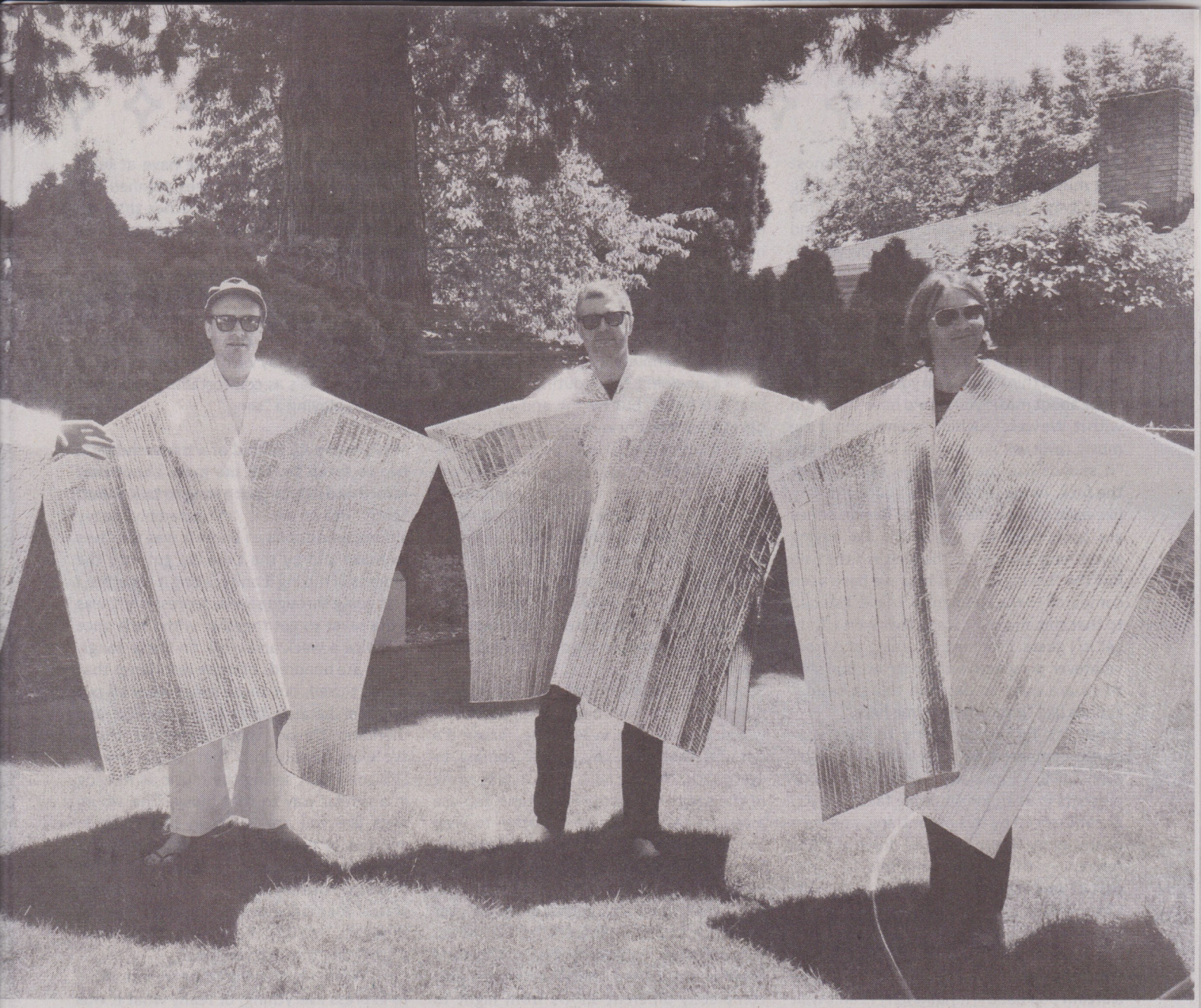
Chris: We spit kombucha at anyone vibing us or telling us that they would like our music if only we would dress a certain way or play a certain way. I hate that shit. Never trust music "scenes." I get that for some people it is nice to have a place to belong, but that is not for me. I am way too shy and paranoid for all that. It's interesting that the punk scene in some ways went from a place that the freaks created for anyone on the fringes to a scene with all sorts of rules about who is allowed to join the different costume parties. I guess I just ended up doing exactly what I was complaining about. I am truly not out to attack what other people do musically or socially, I just care deeply about music itself and I hate to see it used for shallow ends like attention seeking popularity or purely



monetary interests or a social rendezvous. Maybe I am just pissed because our band is not popular with the new age noise kids.
Scott: I feel like you don't need to go around being preachy or preaching to the choir or making super topical music to be oppositional. I think the true evil of the world is corporate capitalism, and doing as much as you can to be in opposition to that is what is most important. I feel intense anger about a lot of the nightmarish aspects of our culture, but the most creepy thing is the incredibly intense psychological warfare, propaganda, and manipulation. I watched so many leftist people in the lead up to the Trump election parroting long time Limbaugh-style talking points and this weird self-hating bullshit stemming from this idea that all leftists are "latte liberals" driving around in new Volvos with their yoga pants on.
Chris: It's divide and conquer bullshit.
Scott: There is an aspect of it that is true, but it applies to a small percentage. I'm a cappuccino man, myself.
Chris: I live and abide by a strict Starbucks only code of ethics and I *love* wearing yoga pants.

MRR: You guys are scum.
Chris: We are very concerned with the form that our music takes, and I believe that in order to be oppositional, punk music needs to strive to be original and not fall back too heavily on ideas that have been used before. If you are copying a band or genre, that is all you are doing. It doesn't matter if you are the first band to copy that other band. It doesn't make you original or oppositional in any way. At the same time, it is also important for us to fight to maintain originality as we get older as people. I have been making records for eighteen years now, and I don't ever want to fall into the easy pattern of making music that always relies on the same formula. This is boring and its part of why punk music as a "genre" or "style" has become stale in some ways. It is also just boring to play the same songs over and over again, so we work hard to make music that keeps us interested in playing it. In no way am I saying that punk music or guitar based music or rock'n'roll or whatever you want to call it is dead or dying. That is another idea that we constantly fight against. I was recently at a local museum that had a psychedelic music exhibit with a profile of Ray Manzarek from 1969 where he wrote that there were no other good contemporary bands at the time. That's insane. Some of the best music ever came out in 1969. People that walk around saying such and such music is dead are not helpful and are negative scumbags. Recorded pop music in all its forms is a powerful artform that is just being born. What is missing is creative thought and people willing to push beyond the safety pins and normcore hats. The possibilities are always endless.
Scott: I think you should just strive to make music that is really good and true to you. I don't give a fuck about genres or scenes. I just care about whether something is good or not. I have lots of friends in the experimental music scene, and it's like high school to me. They all tend to like the exact same things at the same time and have this contempt for anything with a drum kit. They are actively ripping off Cluster or Haruomi Hosono or some techno guy but because they're using a Yahama DX7 instead of a guitar they think they are avant garde. It's a joke. They are no more avant garde than a Misfits cover band. It's the same thing: people thinking they are radical because they are aping someting that was radical 30 to 50 years ago. Which wouldn't bother me if they didn't come off with this vibe of thinking they are on some next level shit.

MRR: How do you fit into the legacy of punk in the place where you live?
Scott: I don't think of it in terms of punks but more in terms of the real culture of the place. We've lived here a long time and played in bands that are kind of in the punk scene (Hunches, Eat Skull). There are the obvious inspirational role models here like Dead Moon or Smegma. There are badass females involved in most of the cool bands. Toody in Dead Moon and Jackie from Smegma. My favorite PDX punk song is "Give Me The Message" by the Neo Boys. I think that song stands tall above the rest from the late '70s / early '80s punk pack. But what do I know? I like Nu Shooz way more than the Wipers. Send your hate mail now, kids. My name is Jeff Bezos and I'm the CEO of Amazon.
Chris: I always strove to not fit into the legacy of punk in Portland. I pride myself on not playing in bands that copy the aesthetics of Poison Idea, the Wipers, or Dead Moon. That is not to say that I don't like the big three Portland punk bands, but the go to definition of punk for a city is usually not the most accurate definition. When I think of Portland punks, I go back to people like Ursula K. LeGuin or Hazel Hall. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is a revolutionary and mind-changing book. LeGuin's speech at the National Book Awards is a truly courageous moment in local "punk" history.
Scott: I was recently reading a biography of Miles Davis and in it there was a passage where Davis used the term "local as fuck" to describe an unmemorable approach to music that every city has to deal with.
Chris: *[laughter]* Yeah, it is imperative for us to constantly work to make music that is not "*local as fuck.*" It is an easy trap to fall



into because making copycat cookie cutter vanilla straight music will gain you lots of popularity here in Portland.

MRR: OK, what was your formative punk rock experience?

Scott: I was a stoner in high school. I dressed like a roadie for Led Zeppelin. I was a music head, though, so I was always seeking new stuff out. I had limited access to underground culture, so at first it all came from like *Rolling Stone* magazine. I went to my first punk show in high school. Being the super "punk" that I was, I insisted on wearing a "dancing bears" Grateful Dead shirt. I also had long hair. I knew this was a no-no, so it was a not so subtle protest, but most people just thought I was a stupid hippy. I was pretty nervous 'cause I was super baked and people were sneering at me and shit, but once the music kicked in and the pit started moving I was excited and then when some dude fell on the ground, the most punk looking dude in the crowd immediately dropped down and helped the guy up. Punks, hippies—it's all the same shit!

Chris: My high school band the Conmen played a show in Roseburg, which was a small logging city far from the liberal safety zones here in Oregon. The kids from Roseburg fucking loved it and were so enthusiastic and going nuts in the crowd. They were not dressed like fashion punks but more like small town freaks. This was my first taste of playing to people that just wanted to hear music and were maybe kind of starved for stuff in the town they were from and just that feeling of kinship across political, economical, and musical genres and all that shit. I still would rather play small cities if at all possible. It just seems like those kids are always happier to hear music and more open minded than the big city jaded seen-it-all / heard-it-all dorks.

MRR: What is the most frustrating thing about making music?

Scott: Most bands, at least the ones I'm into, don't sit around and make their music like a jigsaw puzzle where you put the piece you stole from this band next to the piece you

stole from another. But if you read almost any music review, they present everything that way. The reviewers also presume they know exactly what you meant and mention other bands as if they *know* you are referencing them specifically. And in every band I've been in and 99% of every review that's been written, they are *wrong*!

Chris: Yeah, music reviews are generally very unimaginative and very assembly line. You would think that if all you have to do is write about music you would have some fun with it. We were laughing recently about the music reviewer standby use of the phrase "it sounds like the Stooges / MC5." What the fuck. To me those bands sound nothing like each other. I mean, why? Because they are both from Michigan? It's like saying something sounds like the Smiths / the Fall. But the fucking worst is how we have been compared to the Elephant 6. I never listened to that shit and can't stand that world. But I get it, I guess. Everyone is coming at it from whatever perspective they are at. But still, there are ways to describe things besides sounds like "insert band name here."

Scott: It's fucking annoying to have your music compared to something you don't even like, especially when someone presents it as an indisputable fact that you are influenced by this other thing, and then nearly every future reviewer down the line references this review and this becomes part of your "sound."

Chris: This is a big problem in the internet age, and I think that unfortunately,it causes bands to get labelled as something far from what they are. Some people are calling us a *dream pop* band??!! *[laughter]* I can't wait to shake off that bullshit. The last thing I would ever want is to be associated with some yoga industrial complex brainwasher like Beach House.

MRR: *Heavy Air* is a pretty hermetic sounding record and a home recording project, how did the live band come about?

Scott: During the process of mixing the record, we realized we wanted to do this live. Because none of *Heavy Air* was recorded live (everything was built up track by track), we had to figure out how to play the songs live. Some things were really easy and sound very similar to the recorded version. Other things are radically different, to the point where people don't even recognize them from the album.

Chris: When I started recording *Heavy Air*, I was at a place where I honestly didn't know if I ever wanted to play live again. I had gotten really burnt out with my former bands and feeling the need to always have to play fast, noisy, nihilist, alcoholic, go nuts on stage, etc. *Heavy Air* is almost a reaction to that. Like saying "I am going to do the complete opposite because I am so sick of doing that routine." It took six years to finish, but by the end of it I had developed these new musical relationships with my brother (Luc), Ben, and Scott, and I felt comfortable trying the live thing again. At this point, we have been playing live together for three years, and it is really wonderful because these guys are great musicians that are willing to try anything musically or non-musically. Our new album, *Mow the Glass*, is kind of a reflection of that happiness. It is very different from *Heavy Air* in that it is a concise recording of a full band playing live.

Scott: We definitely set out to play a different show from night to night. Which is a ridiculous goal in Portland, 'cause it's not like there are any people coming to every show. But we have tried to play some of the songs differently every time and use a certain amount of improvisation to keep things fresh and weird. In the beginning, we were a little looser and had a lot more mellow songs. The energy level has gone up, but I think we'll still gonna move all over the place and play different kindsa shows. Was definitely inspired by the Sun City Girls growing up. I liked that they would play completely different shows from night to night but also that they would turn the songs inside out. It was like a Grateful Dead thing but way more wild and rooted more in free jazz.

Chris: The Grateful Dead thing is a model that we love. We follow their idea of "do whatever it takes to keep your music fun and interesting to play." Getting locked into a formula or a sound will kill a band very quickly. A band should first and foremost play for their own enjoyment or else it comes off as contrived. There is no way that a person can enjoy playing a song the exact same way for their entire career. I also like how the Dead made records that have very different vibes yet still sound like the same band. That is something we are very conscious of doing also. We have at least four more records and tapes planned out all with very different approaches that will hopefully shake off this *dream pop* tag once and for all.

Scott: Our friend Barry Walker plays pedal steel on the new album and he's also played with us live. Both in full band configurations and shows where Luc couldn't make it. Hoping we can play with that some more in the future. He's as comfortable getting out there as playing a "song."

MRR: *Heavy Air* is kind of a transcendental trip to listen to. Tell me more about that record and maybe pick a song to talk about.

Scott: Heavy Air is an incredibly heavy album, emotionally. I know it was for Chris to make and by the time we got into the process of mixing it and putting it together, I was going through severe depression. It was a life saver to get together with Chris once or twice a week and work on these songs. There are hundreds of more recordings that weren't used, but these songs were all put together because they had a musical and thematic thread that connected them. We were heavily into that movie *Tree Of Life* and I kept seeing the music as flowing in a similar way to that movie. The album feels like you are laying in bed going in and out of consciousness. Sometimes you are wide awake and focused, and other times you are slipping in and out of dream states: memories competing with invasive thoughts, anxiety, happiness, depression. All swirling through your head.

Chris: Yeah, I was trying to figure out a way to express everything, or really what it was like to exist in this time and in this skin, and the standard songwriting approach was not working for me anymore.

Scott: "Demons In The Dusk" is really evocative for me. I grew up in a college party town. I always had this anxious feeling about Friday / Saturday nights. I was excited for what might happen but also scared of these rednecks driving around in their big trucks and jocks in muscle cars and just wasted people acting out. This was majorly amplified in high school by acid and weed. There was always this fear in the back of my mind of these demons coming out and what they would do. Violence creeps.

Chris: That's funny because growing up in Eugene, Oregon, wasted jocks lighting

shit on fire after the football game was a huge part of our reality. Strange parties in the woods are memories that will always haunt me from this time. "The Lawn" is a song I am very proud of, and it seems like it resonates strongly with other people. When I was very young, my parents didn't really own much music, but one CD they had was Leonard Cohen, and I would sit and listen to "Famous Blue Raincoat" over and over and cry. I felt this immense comfort in that sadness, and I think I have always tried to make music that can connect with people like that. "The Lawn" has some Leonard Cohen in it, and I am proud of that. I don't think it sounds like Leonard Cohen, but that feeling is there for me.

MRR: *Mow the Glass* is your newest record. Pick something to talk about that you wish an interviewer would ask you.

Chris: "Just Like Anything" is the song I am the happiest with. It is a cover of Jackson C. Frank, who was this folk singer from the '60s who made one beautiful record. He deserves some sort of medal for endurance considering the horrible events that life threw at him. We tried to inject some *Bull of the Woods* energy into this song and I think we succeeded. I always think that a cover should offer something new to a song, and I am proud of what we did here. Justin Higgins, the recording engineer, and I spent hours with a guitar and tiny amp in a stairwell seeking out sounds, and I am happy we took that time.

Scott: We just really wanted to make a more immediate album that was close to what we were doing live at the time. I'm happy with the whole thing. We rented a cabin at the coast from a friend and Justin brought out a bunch of recording gear. It was a pretty magical experience and the limitations of what we had to work with (eight tracks), what we mixed on, and the room we recorded in make for a unique sound.

Chris: *Mow the Glass* is a reaction to the first record and certainly a part of it as well. I like that it is really the complete opposite of *Heavy Air*. There are many things that I would change about it, but it has to be what it is. It is an album made very quickly, and it has a lightness and a unique sound for that reason. The songs on *Heavy Air* have so many layers, and *Mow the Glass* is very simple comparatively. I had not made a record with a band in ten years, and there is kind of a hesitancy and a feeling of learning it again. I like it sometimes, and there are other songs that I wish we could do again because we didn't capture them how I wanted. That's cool, though, we will try again and it will be different next time and I won't be satisfied and we will try again after that. The main thing is to keep going and to stay enthusiastic and interested.

thelavenderflu.bandcamp.com

GUMMING

Few things are more heartwarming and totally mood altering than turning on your car radio to the local independent station to hear your friends' band that you love heavily at the exact right moment in your shitty day when you really need it the most. Since forming in 2017, Richmond, VA's Gumming has done that and more. Gumming fills a void for me, and I'm pretty sure the rest of this town could say the same. Their most recent tape, Human Values, continues to expand on their instantly recognizable punchy-syncopated-rhythmic sound while incorporating just enough new exploration to keep things fresh and interesting. If you listen to Gumming or see them live and don't feel like dancing, you aint doin' it right!

Interview by Callie.

Photos by Ashley Travis, Dennis Williford, and Mateo Montoya.

Gumming is
Emilie (Vocals)
Marisa (Bass)
Landon (Guitar)
Lee (Drums)

MRR: I guess there's the Harrisonburg link, but how did you guys officially meet?
Lee: I met Landon and Marisa when they played in Whorecough and my group at the time, Buttercup or Pucker Up, was touring through and played with them.
Marisa: Well, Landon and I have been playing in bands together for a while. There was Whorecough and then Valley Slander. Then when we both moved here, we knew we wanted to start a band again. It might have been at VSC or somewhere...I forget where it was.
Landon: It was at Lovejail.
Marisa: Yeah, and Landon saw Lee and was like "holy shit, that's Lee from Pucker Up" and talked to him.
Emilie: And I was the afterthought, yeah...

MRR: Nah! You were the completion cherry on top, how about that?
Marisa: Well, it was all kind of happening in different places at

the same time. 'Cause Emilie and I had been talking for a while about doing a band together too. So Landon and I wanted it to happen, Emilie and I wanted it to happen, and it was awesome that Lee was here too.

MRR: So some perfect timing.
Marisa: Perfect, yeah.
Emilie: It all fell into place really quickly.
Landon: I think songwriting-wise too, those last two bands that Marisa and I were in, the songwriting process was that we would just send each other voice demos of parts, so that's how we wrote songs for both of those bands. Then since we moved here, we were practicing just in my apartment for a couple of months, just guitar and bass. So probably the first four or five songs that we wrote came from that. So we had some written before we started playing with Lee.

MRR: What's the songwriting process like for you guys and how did it evolve past the two of you once you brought in Lee and Emilie? What does it look like now?
Landon: It definitely has evolved in that sense because the first couple of songs were sort of pre-written and now it's just very spontaneous at practice. It's been cool because Lee does a thing where he'll sing parts to us.

MRR: I feel like you can really hear that too.
Lee: Yeah also, the riffs are easy to play to. A lot of the music is really driving, which is the kind of band I've been wanting to play drums for for a while. I've just been in weirdo bands and stuff, so it's good to play in a rockin' band like this. And then through all the fuzz I start to hear different stuff, and then if I have something stuck in my head on my way to practice, I'll just sort of mime it out and we'll get kind of close to that, but it'll end up being nothing like what I thought it was going to be like. And then it'll just be a Gumming song.

MRR: This is making me really happy because when I was writing down some notes for this interview I wrote down "melodic, noisey, dancey, slinky" cause I was thinking about what I feel like and how I move when I go to your shows.
Lee: I always want it to be dancey.

MRR: Yeah, there's a total natural movement inclination when you guys start playing and I think I even had a note about dance or movement styles. Do you guys notice that you all have a sort of signature movement?
Landon: I don't think we consciously do all that on purpose, but we do consciously want it to be really fun.
Lee: We don't plan out moves or anything, but it's definitely an energetic band, and if we're not putting any energy into it, then how can we expect anyone else to?

MRR: You guys are a band that kind of brings all the subcultures of Richmond together in a way, I don't know if you would agree? Or really notice that? Noise people come out, people that only usually come out to punk shows or hardcore shows come out. Even WRIR [an independent Richmond radio station] backs you guys really hard and you guys played their showcase. Do you feel that?
Landon: Yeah, I think it comes down to the frequency of shows were playing for the first year we were a band. We basically just said yes to every show someone asked us to play on because we were excited to be a band. So yeah, we were playing hardcore shows and then indie rock shows and total noise freak out shows for a while. We were playing a lot, a lot of shows.
Lee: Plus the style of music does bridge some gaps in between the genres there, especially just between punk and noise. I would say we're a noise-punk band.
Emilie: Yeah definitely, and I think that also just the different pockets of people that we're friends with too. We're all friends with people that exist within most scenes, so I think at the beginning a lot of it was just friends stoked to support their friends.
Lee: Yeah, regardless of what the band sounds like, it was just, "Hey we're buddies, come on out to the show."
Emilie: Yeah, I remember...I think it was with Patrick...when we played a show at My Noodle and he had only heard the practice space recordings, not the demo or anything, and he was like, "you didn't tell me you guys were good!"
Lee: People ended up liking it!
Emilie: People ended up liking it and taking to it because it's fun. Everybody tends to have fun.
Lee: Plus a lot of other people in Richmond are in every single other type of band, noise kids are also in rock'n'roll bands, they're also in indie pop bands, and everybody's in every scene whether they want to be or not. It's just a small city and a small community.
Landon: Yeah, I think we owe a lot to people who were willing to book us. We played a lot of shows, but we also played with certain bands a lot. And I think we were lucky that they wanted us to play with them.

MRR: Yeah, I wanted to ask about the Unsane show and can you guys talk about any favorite shows?
Marisa: There's been a lot of fun shows and also just back to what everyone was saying, a lot of different shows. We'll play a really fun, good atmosphere show that's in a house, but then we'll go to a venue and do the same thing.

MRR: Or under the billboard...
Landon: Yeah, that was a good one!
Marisa: Just lots of opportunities to play different kinds of atmospheres of shows.
Lee: Also you mention the Unsane show...I like the shows better where we play under a billboard or in a kitchen or a basement. It's just a lot more fun for our sound. It always sounds good when we play in a space which is cool for people to see and come out to, but as far as favorite shows, go I much prefer playing a shitty kitchen or basement.

MRR: More intimate?
Lee: Yeah, or under the bridge or whatever.
Emilie: I think one of my favorites was when we played with Dog and Locker Room at Unicorn Gardens. I think that it was Dog, Locker Room, SSS... and that was just noise. Just straight up noise, cool and fun noise then drifted into punk then noise rock...I think that show was really fun because it was with a bunch of bands that are super performative and also fun and friendly.
Lee: My favorite shows are shows we play with good buddies.

Like our friends from Denton, Texas under the billboard or playing with Dog or anyone coming through town that we haven't seen in a while...Sediment Club was a lot of fun. It might even be easier to find a bad show we've played. I can't even think of one off the top of my head.
Emilie: We've played some bad shows.
Lee: Well yeah, when you say yes to everything...
Emilie: We've been really fortunate to play some really good shows and mostly fun shows.

MRR: Going back to talking about bigger venues versus a smaller, more intimate space...I remember when you guys played Be Bad Weekend, that was one of the first times I could hear Emilie's lyrics live, and I remember that being kind of moving in a cool way. Everything sounded super dynamic 'cause it's easy for vocals to get kind of muddled in a smaller space...
Lee: Yeah 'cause our friends have shitty PAs!
Landon: One thing that's been cool for us as a band is that we write the song and it's not quite a song 'til Emilie's vocals are on it, and even once her vocals are on, I don't think we really know exactly what she's saying unless she tells us, "Oh, I'm doing this."
Emilie: I don't think I usually tell y'all...
Landon: No, not for a while...and even after we've put recordings out its cool for the three of us to read lyrics like, "Oh, that's what Emilie's saying in that song!"

MRR: Yeah, that's something I wanted to touch on because from a fan perspective I think you guys all fit together so well. Like if someone moved away, it just wouldn't be the same band. So hearing you say that about Emilie is cool. I wanted to ask you guys about themes that pop up across several songs like TV, teeth, anger, mental health, and anxiety...do you always focus on sort of relatable topics?

Emilie: It's half approaching it with an idea, a thematic idea there are certainly songs that based more on one idea and then there are ones that are just pieced together stream of consciousness. That's mostly based on how the sound works in my mouth. I think that when doing vocals especially doing them the way that I do, and that type of growly voice...I'd much rather a word make a good sound...

MRR: Yeah, there's a lot of kind of syncopation happening?
Emilie: Because I want the vocals to complement the music and not just sit on top of it. I want it to be a part of what everyone else is doing because I think a lot of times vocals can kind of just exist on their own separate way. But when I started playing with them they had written seven songs or something and I just genuinely loved the songs. And I had never been in a band before, so I was trying really hard to just compliment the music. In terms of subject matter, yeah anxiety depression and just spooky stuff...horror themes and again, picking out words I really like and really like the sound of and the thought that it provokes so, teeth and mouth stuff.

MRR: Even "Gumming" kind of fits into that connecting theme...
Emilie: I think at that point when I was writing all that I was in a really shitty situation, in a pretty bad mood and pretty bad headspace for a lot of things, so I was automatically gravitating towards everything within the head and that's what ended up happening. Then progressively I've moved away from that.

MRR: It seems like it's gotten a little lighter with songs with "Hank." I love that song...
Lee: That's a Landon song!

MRR: It's a great song, there's that sort of...well, the name

sort of provokes a western kind of thing? And there's that little twang and the first part of the lyrics are even a little more uplifting.
Emilie: It's a country song! And that's funny because I wrote those lyrics in five minutes. Those are some of the lyrics that I'm most pleased with and it's just legitimately trying to rhyme. I just knew I wanted everything to rhyme so it was just stream of consciousness. And I was writing it on my notepad and I was kind of letting autocorrect guide my sentences...
Landon: Steve Jobs wrote that song.

MRR: I had a note here saying each Gumming song sounds similar enough to where you know it's a Gumming song but different enough so that you don't get bored, and I think "Hank" is a good example of one of the newer songs that jumped out to me as having a little bit of a different feel.
Lee: Yeah, you don't wanna write the same song over and over again. That's something I kind of hate.
Landon: I think we're very hyper conscious of "Does this song sound like another one of our songs?" and if it does we'll scrap it. "Hank" was actually a riff that had been written a long, long time ago. At various points in my life I've tried to write country songs and generally failed and then that was one that I had even tried with other bands but had given up on. It probably just worked out for us in practice one day...I know Lee's a big country music fan, Emilie is as well...I can't speak for Marisa, but I think that is a connection for some of us in the band.
Emilie: We don't necessarily like the same kinds of country music.
Landon: Marisa likes Country Teasers, though, and it's sort of in a Country Teasers mind set... But I think when I was writing that it was meant to be like an actual country song, and then I just put it to bed until a Gumming practice.

MRR: Do yall have any other commonalities, links, or influences? Reasons why you make music and why you make it together?
Emilie: Lee and I both love pop music.
Lee: I feel like I didn't really know Emilie until we were in the car on the way to some show and she put on Kesha. We both have a deep love of Kesha...
Emilie: Carly Rae Jepsen is a fucking genius.
Lee: So there's that connection between the both of us.
Emilie: Which is probably where a lot of the punchiness comes from.
Lee: Yeah a lot of that dancey, punchiness is inspired by nihilistic girl pop music.
Emilie: And Marisa just has excellent taste in music and is the reason I like so many good bands
Marisa: We've always kind of been showing each other new things like, "All right! I'm obsessed with this band right now!" We lived together, and we've been friends forever so we would go to shows and stuff together.
Emilie: That's the foundation of our friendship.
Marisa: But Landon and I also have lots of connections just because of our past history with music, but even when we started playing together, just vibing with each other and liking the sound so continuing to be in bands together. So that's a cool thing to experience in every different band we've been in and specifically this band. We've been in other bands and they sound different, but we have a similar connection between the bass and the guitar.
Lee: You guys write really well together, for sure. It's crazy.
Landon: We've almost like a positive codependency.
Lee: I can't imagine you guys in a band with another person.
Landon: I don't want to play with anyone else, Marisa is really the only person I want to play in a band with as far as bass. The thing about this band is that there's a lot of trust. If one person knows if they bring a part to practice you don't have worry about having to direct anybody else. I don't think any one of us has told anyone else what to play.

MRR: Do you think that's why you guys are so successful and why you're able to keep having so much fun with it?
Emilie: I think since we're all in our late twenties we've gotten to the point where we're comfortable in our skin and comfortable with who we are as people and comfortable with our bodies and the way we move. I think at first, I definitely didn't move as much, but once I realized Lee was standing up in the middle of songs, I fed off of that energy and off of Landon's energy. And also, I can look at Marisa. She looks like the coolest person I've ever met in my life when she's playing. Feeding off of each other and the other people's confidence and I think that makes everyone feel like they can participate with us.

MRR: Oh yeah, you guys being so confident and free definitely helps everyone else to feel good while watching a set and feels free to open up and dance... A Gumming show kind of reminds me of what is so great and what has always been so great about Richmond.
Landon: Well, the interesting thing about that is that other than Emilie we're kind of like ex-pats...we've only been here two years max. Emilie's more the Richmond native than any of us.
Lee: It doesn't matter what the city turns into, it's the people. So regardless of what the city used to be or where it's headed, I'm just happy we're here at the right time when there are a bunch of cool people here.

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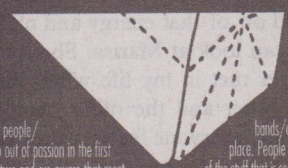

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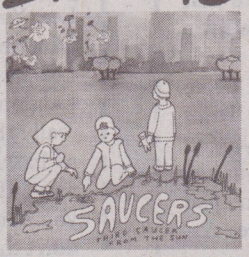

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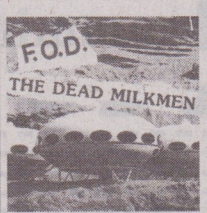

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Syringe

Syringe is a crust punk band from Baltimore, Maryland. They formed in 2016 when a local band dropped off a show at Barclay House and they quickly needed to fill the space in the lineup. They played three songs to get the show going. Since then, the band has dug through the vaults of '90s crust and has emerged with their own sound backed by an unwavering political stance. With dueling vocals, relentless noise, and fast as fuck drumming, their first EP was released by Ryvvolte Records in April 2018. They have a new flexi out on Dark Raids Records. The band happens to be some of the nicest punks around! I caught up with them one day before practice to enjoy my new AC unit.

Interview by Adrienne Thomas.
Photos by EM DeMarco and Ben Price.

Jade: guitar *Ben: bass*
Vaughn: drums *Megan & Grey: vocals*

MRR: First off, congrats on a great year for the band! Multiple recordings and a West Coast tour! Saying you're a tight knit group would be an understatement. From where do you pull other influences to keep shit fresh?

Grey: Thanks! Yeah, we've been a band for almost two years and we have been fortunate to stay so busy with shows, recording, and touring.

Megan: We are all on the same page about most things political and social, so then it's just us working through writing songs. Since we've been playing together for a while, and several of us live together, we've moved past the polite phase and can now just cut the shit and tell each other like it is.

Grey: It definitely makes songwriting easier when you can just be honest with each other.

Vaughn: My drumming influences are pretty varied, with Tony from Doom and Igor from Sepultura being two major ones.

Ben: We all have influences beyond crust punk that we can bring to the band. I grew up on '90s crust and anarcho-punk, but I also like a lot of darker post-punk bands as well.

Jade: Discharge and Doom.

MRR: "Syringe" as a band name is not the typical D-beat band reference, so what's the reason for this choice?

Grey: We decided on the name Syringe because it brings strong imagery to mind. In Baltimore, and in punk, there is the obvious drug connotation. It can be a symbol of despair and destruction, but on the other side of the coin, for trans folks, it can be something that gives us life, something that saves us from self destruction.

MRR: Living in a city like Baltimore leaves a mark on you. How much of your experiences here influence the band?

Megan: I'm from here; I love Baltimore. We get a bad rap thanks to television, and shit here is wild, but it's home and there is a lot to love about it. Things don't just get handed to you here, so people really have to work together to create community. We have all been involved in activism to some extent here: it's impossible not to be! So I'd say the influence of a broken infrastructure, the constant police surveillance, heroin and opioid addiction, blocks of abandoned houses...yeah, it helps paint a pretty apocalyptic picture. But there are community gardens, DIY venues, hiking trails, clothes swaps. You

get the good and the bad.

MRR: What do you think your social responsibilities are as a band?
Jade: Combating bigotry within the larger scene, providing representation for some young punks. Visibility and representation are only the most basic stepping stones towards liberation. The only states as far as I know to ban the gay / trans panic defense are California, Illinois, and Rhode Island. That means there are still 47 states where you can justify attacking or killing someone for being gay or trans. We need more than just visibility when we don't even have rights. *But* it's important for people to know that trans people exist in punk and in this world. That being said, it's not cowardly if you don't feel safe coming out and need to be stealth for security / sanity purposes. I want people to feel safe in our spaces and in our presence.
Megan: Thankfully this band also features two straight cis men who are actually fucking cool people! *[laughter]*

MRR: Jade, what's it like to be the straightedge band mom?
Jade: I love being the permanent DD [designated driver]. I know so many people who have had or continue to struggle with addiction or substance abuse. It's not something to be ashamed of or made light of. I'm sure if I hadn't started listening to Minor Threat and claimed edge at a young age I'd be a more fucked up person. My sobriety is something really important not just to me but something I hope people can see and know that it is possible for them too. As much as being a wasteoid is part of the punk aesthetic, it's not the only way to be. As an anarchist, I find that sobriety is an important tool in fighting oppression and abuse. Being always aware of my surroundings means I can act quicker if someone is being fucked up. This isn't a moral stance by any means, though. This isn't how everyone uses their sobriety. To quote Gather, *"If you think that we have things in common just because we both wear Xs on our hands, you're wrong!"*

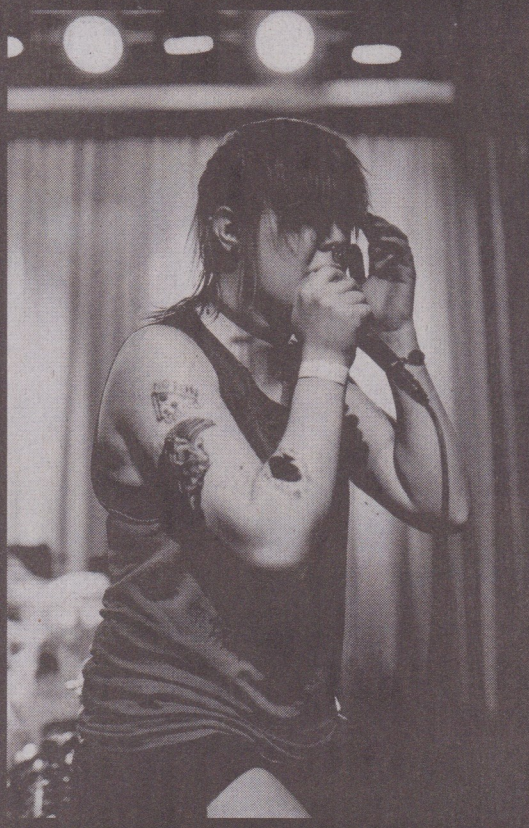
MRR: What is your connection to the DIY scene here outside of the band?
Grey: We all work in some capacity at Sidebar, a long running punk venue in downtown Baltimore. We all help book shows and host bands while they're on tour. I think a big part of DIY is physically being there.
Jade: I make a lot of flyer art and work at our local punk record store, Celebrated Summer Records.
Megan: We definitely have a smaller scene here, so we find it's important to reach out and play with bands outside our "punk" realm.

MRR: Right, yeah, there isn't a huge punk community here, so how does the band integrate itself into the rest of the DIY scene?
Jade: We play with lots of bands from different scenes. We recently played a show with Multicult,

that was really awesome.
Vaughn: We played a show that was a ten year anniversary bash for local skate shop Vu with hip hop legends Smif-N-Wessun, Cormega, and Eze Jackson back in June; that was pretty sick.
Ben: Playing benefit shows is always a good way to play with a mix of bands. Raising awareness of social issues and raising money for good causes isn't something I can do as well by myself.
Grey: It's fun to play with bands from other genres because sometimes that's a way to get someone interested who may have never seen us otherwise. I think that we are lucky that while our sound is certainly "crust," we have a lot of cross appeal in hardcore, and in queer spaces.
Jade: We have played some shows booked by people who usually just book all white cis male bands. It's important for us to still play shows like that because you don't know who will come out to those shows and having someone in a band look like you can be really important. Maybe that person will then start coming to shows where there is more diversity and start their own band too.

MRR: Grey and Jade, how does being trans fit in with your punk identities?
Grey: For me, being visible as a trans person in punk is extremely important, yet it is a double-edged sword. It can be exhilarating and uplifting, and it can be terrifying. I've looked at the crowd at shows and seen so many trans folks (and more recently, much younger trans punks) and it's a truly incredible sight. But I've also been harassed in bathrooms at big shows, at various stages during my medical transition. Sometimes it is a struggle to maintain my identity but also maintain my safety. I very much dislike the trans narrative of "being born in the wrong body." I certainly don't feel that way. I am proud of who I am, and I'm glad I lived as a woman in punk as long as I did. Sometimes when I am first meeting a punk, I wonder who I can be "they" in front of (my preferred pronoun) and who I have to be "he" for.
Jade: Yeah, being trans isn't something to be ashamed of even if your family or friends don't understand. It doesn't mean you can't be in a band, go on tour, and stuff that everyone else gets to do. This last tour mostly happened thanks to transwomen. I really feel like for the most part trans punks have each other's backs and I'm extremely thankful to be in a band where I know my bandmates are willing to throw down if need be. I'm not saying anything that hasn't been said before or better by more well-spoken women. I'm definitely more of a fighter than a diplomat or speaker.

MRR: Do you ever feel tokenized by having a female singer or by having trans members?
Jade: Yeah, I mean, it's inevitable. Sometimes you look at the lineup and are like "OK, I see how we check some boxes here." But mostly, it's fine because again, we are reaching people who may not otherwise see themselves represented at a show and that visibility is really important.
Megan: "Female-fronted" is such a joke, and yet having a teenage girl see Syringe play and see that they can do this too—that's huge. That's how I got involved in bands.



MRR: What are some other music projects you are all working on outside this band?
Vaughn: I play drums in Humanmania (Grey plays guitar), and in B.R.A.T (Jade sings). Megan plays bass in Glue Traps, and Ben plays bass in Total Maniac.

MRR: How has your relationship to punk changed over the years?
Vaughn: My parents came up punk and raised me to be really interested in music. They introduced me to lots of punk and hardcore bands at an early age. Now it's about doing my own thing. I used to be a sponsored skateboarder before I realized I wanted to spend my time and energy playing music.
Grey: Sometimes I feel like I've lost something when I see a group of punk women. I'm so glad punk women are running shit, yet I wish I could be more of a part of it. I know that isn't me, and it wasn't ever me. I don't think I could have continued my life without medically transitioning. I felt like the best, and punkest, thing I could do for myself and community I love so dearly, was to be true to myself. Medically transitioning isn't right for every trans person, but I am grateful I can pursue my truth. I hope that by being open about my identity, I am able to inspire and assure other transmasculine folks in punk circles. You are strong, brave, wanted, and loved!

MRR: How about in terms of advances in technology?
Megan: There are so many more ways to find out about bands and shows because of the internet, which can be a pro and a con.

Jade: There are so many more ways for assholes and bigots to infiltrate the scene now. We have to be more vigilant and pay attention to who's in our spaces.
Megan: Exactly. And the use of social media to infiltrate spaces by cops, racists, and other boneheads has led to places closing in the last few years—in Baltimore just like in places across the country. Overall, though, it's really awesome to flyer for shows online in addition to paper flyers stapled and taped across town.
Ben: When I first started touring, we just had a notebook full of phone numbers and addresses and found our way around with a road atlas. But booking shows and tours is so accessible now. And it's really amazing to be able to easily keep up with bands in other countries and help in booking those shows too.

MRR: Your first EP was put out by Ryvvolte Records, the new one by Dark Raids Records. How did you hook up with them?
Grey: I met Jay and Kate of Ryvvolte at shows in Philly while playing with Humanmania. I told them I had a new band that sounds like '90s crust, and Jay was really into it. We recorded *Rotten Cycle* and then did a few more songs during the same session. We released those songs as a promo tape called *Surging / Fake Freedom*.
Megan: Jay and Kate are the best!
Grey: Our new flexi, *The Leash*, is being released by our friend Mitchell who runs Dark Raids. We met Mitchell at our first show at Barclay house, with his band at the time, Mutant Itch. He's really into '90s crust and was excited about Syringe. We kept in contact for a few years, and he offered to release something for us. We had just done the *Surging / Fake Freedom* promo tape, so he suggested a different format.

MRR: The *Rotten Cycle* art is really sick. What's the story behind it?
Grey: Joe B is a really awesome artist I've known for a while through him playing with Question and Zero. He made this really sick "living flyer" for the show, which was a cool animated flyer with a sound clip of the first 30 seconds of the EP. The dude is really hard working and one of my favorite artists in punk right now. I gave him the lyrics and idea behind the title track, and he beautifully transcribed it to paper.

MRR: How does each of you decompress and give yourself a chance to enjoy what beauty there is in this shitty world?
Grey: I enjoy being outside with my dog and just getting out of the city for even a few hours. There's a lot of really beautiful green space outside of Baltimore. I really like hiking and swimming with bands when they're visiting on tour.
Ben: I'm not really into the outdoors. I smoke weed, play video games, and enjoy writing music in the darkness of my room.
Vaughn: I skateboard, and watch cartoons / sci-fi films. I also play Doom 2 a lot.
Megan: Smoking weed, doing some face masks, watching wrestling, or power-sleeping.
Jade: Honestly, I haven't been doing well lately and haven't been able to do much self-care, but I know it's okay to not be okay. Reading fiction has been helping me lately; I'm currently reading *A Safe Girl to Love* by Casey Plett.

MRR: What would be your dream lineup for a Syringe show?
Our mutually agreed answer is Extended Hell, Flower, Nightfall, Lebenden Toten, Gauze, and Physique.
Megan: Basically, all our friends' bands!
Grey: We are lucky to have played with some of our favorite bands in the US. We're looking forward to touring more, in new cities, and in different countries. If you'd like to get in touch about records, shows, or just to connect, you can email us at tunelessnoise@gmail.com.

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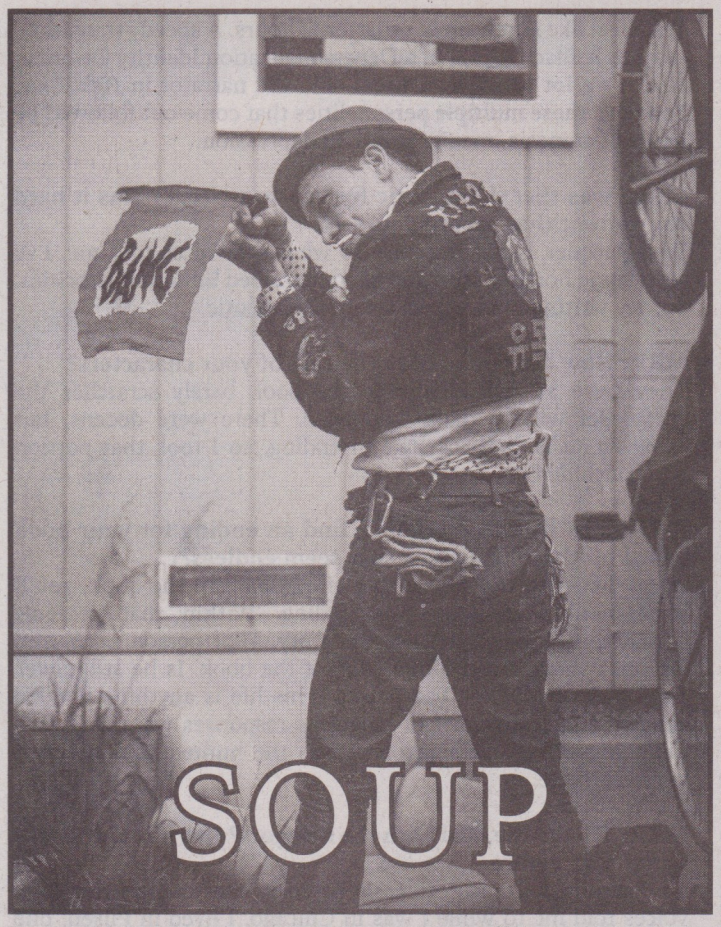

In 2009, I met Soup for the first time in New Orleans. I was just about to be nineteen years old. He was sitting on a stoop on Frenchman Street and had a loud and heavy Chicago accent, tattoos all over his face, and seemed to be some sort of soothsayer of the punk scene there. I was mesmerized by everything in New Orleans at the time, the voodoo city, black magic, the occult, the legends, and of course the alcohol, which was constant and rampant 24 / 7. It was Soup who helped me explore and understand these parts of that city a bit deeper and helped me break out of my naïveté. We have been friends for almost a decade.

I was very excited to read his first book, Harvard Lynch, *when it came out. I read it aloud to my partner on a trip down to the Bay from Humboldt. Soup's writing is entrancing. I read it aloud, mimicking the voices of the characters, making my partner laugh. Soup has now published his second book,* Mombasa Radio Radio, *and we both decided that it would be cool to do an interview about it because this book is incredibly personal and entirely based on the delusions Soup suffered in a psychotic episode that lasted for years. Soup now lives in Richmond, CA with a bunch of artists. Surrounded by sculpture art, freak bikes, and the soothing sounds of fish tanks. Rizzy of Deimos Records conducted this interview for* MRR.

Photos by Christopher Villanella, @c.fehu

MRR: Do you remember when we first met?
I first met you a bunch of times. Which year was that? I kept meeting you because I'm a basket case. One time your boyfriend wanted to beat me up for hanging out. For simply hanging out. *[laughter]*

MRR: I'm sorry about that. I met you when I was being a little oogle back then. I'm glad you introduced me to some more positive people.
You're welcome.

MRR: You were living at Termite and Vine squat 2009 in the 7th ward of New Orleans. I heard that it got sold, right?
It got sold for something like $43,000.

MRR: How long did you live there?
I'm really bad with years too. I don't know my months really. I've got a calendar now because it's the modern age. Also, I kinda have a hard time with that because I really and truly do not give a shit what day it is and I never have. So things like age...It was only this year that I was like "huh, I'm 36 now, I'm an adult." I only realized that the other day. Things like dates are good for tombstones and getting your I.D. for beer. But I don't drink now. I have in the past. *[He mutters under his breath, "Weed's legal, dude."]*

MRR: What was your experience at Termite Squat?
Impending doom. Ye who enter Termite and those who purchase it from beneath thine feet *[takes hit of weed]* impending doom, like Latin. That place was already naturally a flophouse. It was a really cool house of super geniuses. No one wanted to fuck with the house because we could screw you into your own house or cut the power and water and somehow make you pay for it. Some really amazing art came out of that place. Where it went I don't know, it was still a flophouse.

MRR: It was a flophouse for train riders, right?
And artists and the occasional spoiled rich kid that was slumming it. And pretty much at one point or another the entire community lived there, but all at once we had 58 bedrooms in that place. There were attic dwellers and then there were the first floor dwellers and then there were the troglodytes that live in the basement like Stumps the Clown, Patrick, and Dog Poop. True story. *[After this Soup showed me some tricks with some juggling boxes he made.]* They're custom dude. That shit's fire. Did I mention I'm an occult scientist?

MRR: What's that like?
Experimentation on the subconscious of myself, and using myself to transmit whatever I feel desirable in the world around me.

MRR: When you left New Orleans, is that when you started feeling schizophrenic?
No, it's actually very confusing. I've always been like right on the border of insanity my whole life, but because I was unmedicated. I guess the medicines I was taking I wasn't responsive to. I'm finally on some stuff now where I feel pretty good. You know

what I mean? Like up to par. Better than I have in a while. It wasn't until I started really experimenting with occult science and LSD as a catalyst did I truly go insane and I experimented with different deities to see what their response was, and that of course, when you finally break, leads to like an Alice and Wonderland syndrome because it's directly influencing your subconscious.

MRR: What's an Alice in Wonderland syndrome? Like you're falling down a well?
No, it's where the world around you is almost legendary.

MRR: Were the hallucinations you had then were put in the Mombasa?
Absolutely. And this is interesting. But I just recently talked to another schizophrenic, and she had the exact same response from Jesus as I did, which was incredibly negative. Jesus was a complete rage case. Demanded we did everything he told us. Would play tricks on us humiliate us demean us and pretty much psychologically operate on us to the brink of where we became enraged. Yeah. Jesus Christ, the most insanely passionate person in the universe.

MRR: So that was like the kind of torture the characters in your book go through?
Oh yeah, totally. Towards the end of it they ran out of ideas to run through and I lost control of my legs. They belonged to another being inside my body that had me walk around the house. I was allowed to leave the bed go to the bathroom and get something out of the fridge to drink, and then I returned to bed. The guys in the book they don't get that opportunity, but I wanted to express how horrible it was. So by this time also with my Cotard delusions (that's the delusion where you believe you already died so you can't die anymore), weight loss, and muscle atrophy started setting in, and meanwhile, for some reason, I had my iPad set up at the foot of the bed with a camera on me 24 / 7. So it felt like I was forced to be on camera. I couldn't move it. I wasn't allowed to touch it. It just had to look at me. That feeds into another delusion, but I didn't catch that one. There's one where it's the government. But there's themes, everybody goes through themes. There's like sci-fi, horror, or fantasy, or a mixture of lots of different ones. If you can put it in a book, they will exploit that and take you on those types of journeys. But they're most bogus. Sometimes I miss it.

MRR:What inspired you to start writing?
I discovered after losing my mind I was good at it. Not only that, it was quite enjoyable. My voices would basically tell me things and I would write it all down, eventually a story started being told and I was captured by how raw writing is.

MRR: So you started writing without a planned out plot for your books like a stream of consciousness?
Yeah, I just start writing and see where it takes me, whether it's dark or...pleasant.

MRR: Do you think your first book *Harvard Lynch* is less autobiographical?
Yes, absolutely, I just decided one day I was going to write a book. Then the next train of thought was witch hunters, so I just started writing. It's less autobiographical.

MRR: Did you find out anything new about yourself, considering the main character in *Mombasa Radio Radio* is based off of your hallucinations?
Yes. I feel like I grew up in a matter of hours. A speedy transition. Jacques le Black is part of a Depersonalization Identity Disorder. And it's a lot like Tyler Durden and the narrator in *Fight Club*. You have these multiple personalities that come out followed by bouts of amnesia, mania, and then depression.

MRR: Was that therapeutic for you to write, or was it hard to confront that part of yourself?
Well, Jacques is my response to what the voices told me. I've seen some horrible stuff and been described inhuman atrocities. So, yes writing the book was very therapeutic.

MRR: How did you choose the rest of your characters?
They were all hallucinations; the book barely scratches the surface of what actually happened. There were dozens, but *Mombasa Radio Radio* needed an ending, so I took that portion and concluded it.

MRR: Was it hard for you to find an ending for your book based off these delusions that seem endless?
If you listen to the soundtrack after you read the book, you'll understand who wrote the ending. Within that person's parameters, I elaborated on the story. That person is Warren Zevon. I should mail him a copy of the book. Is he still alive? I mean, he had some bad habits if his life is anything like his songwriting. Also most of Jacques's responses were live. So I did things, like...eat maggots. I was the hunted, and I was in survival mode.

MRR: What's the deal with the maggots? I've heard you talk about that before.
So basically, I would recklessly listen to every single thing my voices told me to while I was in Chicago. I lived in Pilsen, one of the most dangerous neighborhoods. So they would just lead me around Pilsen and the surrounding neighborhoods. I would get on trains with these things. I would leave and somehow I would manage how to find my way home eventually. I was doing parkour, but like shitty parkour. They would tell me to climb a ladder and I would climb that fucking ladder. I'm afraid of heights, but I would do it anyway. I was doing stuff like running across rooftops and getting to the end and they would tell me to jump but I would just hang off the ledge of third floor roofs which were actually like a four story drop because Chicago is built on top of older Chicago. So then they would tell me things like "now die." So something would take over my hands and I would let go. I was calm through the whole drop. Something took over me. I was like a light. I could see it was like yellow and I would stick the landing, roll it off and be able to walk out of the roll. I was never hurt. And then someone said "you're dead." And that's when I believed I was dead and I couldn't die anymore. That's when I got really good at jumping from rooftop to rooftop. So basically I'm doing this and they're like "stop, we want you to see something."

So they walked me down this alley, and I saw a woman being tortured to death sexually and the whole neighborhood was in on it. This entire block, and they were taking her into houses and putting her in the most inhumane environments to torture her psychologically to prep the meat. So then these preachers, these people that lived in the neighborhood, took her to the end,, where there was a dumpster lined in feces. The thing smelled like shit. I don't know what was in this dumpster but it smelled like fucking fresh shit and it was empty. They tossed the body in there living, and covered her in the next dumpster with supernatural flesh eating maggots who would then eat the body alive and then shit her out into a fine cheese, which was

to be sold to the extremely wealthy. And they were basically like "you can stop this if you eat the maggots." So I ate the maggots! So yeah, fucking naturally! Damn right I ate those fucking maggots! I ate all of them! But then, they were like "also drink that homebum pee too" and I fucking drank the homebum pee. So I drank homebum pee and ate maggots and that's why.

MRR: Are there things that make you nervous when other people read your book?
Nah. I learned a long time ago to be comfortable with who or what I am.

MRR: That's 'cause you're a badass.
Thanks, dude.

MRR: Was it hard for you to move between fantasy and reality while writing, considering this is closely related to your hallucinations? Did writing bring you back to those moments?
Nah. No PTSD. Well, I haven't been arrested in a while. That could totally be triggering. I'm trying to think what I haven't gone over as far as the aftermath, but I spent a year in recovery. Writing the book was nothing but therapeutic. However, a couple things have changed. I've learned to love torture music such as "Cruel Summer" by Bananarama and U2. Those are the worst of the aftermath. But my perception of reality is forever changed especially the afterlife.

MRR: How long after your recovery did you write your first book *Harvard Lynch?*
I wrote *Harvard* in recovery. It's OK. It is what it is. It's not available anymore. I'm gonna do a new version and release it as a novella. It's on the shelf though, it may never get done, but it's definitely not available anymore.

MRR: Do you think that's why there's a big difference between the two books?
Absolutely. Format, style, everything. I'm still trying to figure out my style.

MRR: Of all the things you have written, what is your favorite passage or plot point?
Oh jeez. It's probably "Hey Jude" in *Mombasa Radio Radio* with the soundtrack.

MRR: Oh yeah, talk a bit about the music element in *Mombasa*. I know you have the soundtrack online.
Yeah, it's on my YouTube channel. You just search for "Mombasa Radio Radio" in playlists. It will drive you nuts trying to listen to it in full with the book, but everyone has their highlights.

MRR: It sets up the book to be more like a movie with a soundtrack. You included Wolfman Jack as a character, right?
Mombasa Radio Radio was best described as a live action role-playing game where my life was on the line, so I feel like I could definitely help as technical advisor. I met the ghost of Wolfman Jack in Chicago, he was doing a one man band thing. Still rockin' after all these years, piece of shit.

MRR: What is your writing routine?
I wish. My writing routine is... I start writing and I don't stop till the story is done. I obviously have to sleep or eat, but that's all I do. But it's irregular. It comes on, and voila, I have a book!

MRR: And your partner Bernadette helps you edit.
Yeah. I have dyslexia and I was part of experimental phonetics during school, so I don't notice mistakes.

MRR: Do you have any big plans for the future?
Yes. My buddy and I are going to drive his car to death this summer. Also, I hope to make *Mombasa Radio Radio* a film. And I have a hip hop project, but I need an MC.

MRR: You gonna blow the car up after?
I'd like to, but he wants to scrap it like a poser. I wanna make some composition B and fill the trunk. Light it with jellied gas and drive it off a cliff. So what's your response to this? I'm like *"woooot!"*

MRR: I'm like *whoop whoop!*
He's like..."But it's a nice car."

MRR: Even better!
That's what I'm saying!

MRR: You should put some effigies of your bodies in the seats.
Nice. Good touch.

MRR: OK, OK, so how can people purchase your books?
Well. You can either order them from Lulu.com or Deimos Records also carries them. There's a direct link to the book *Mombasa Radio Radio* on my Instagram, which is @lucifer_r._ohagan.

MRR: Well anything else on your mind you would like to conclude this interview with?
Nah.

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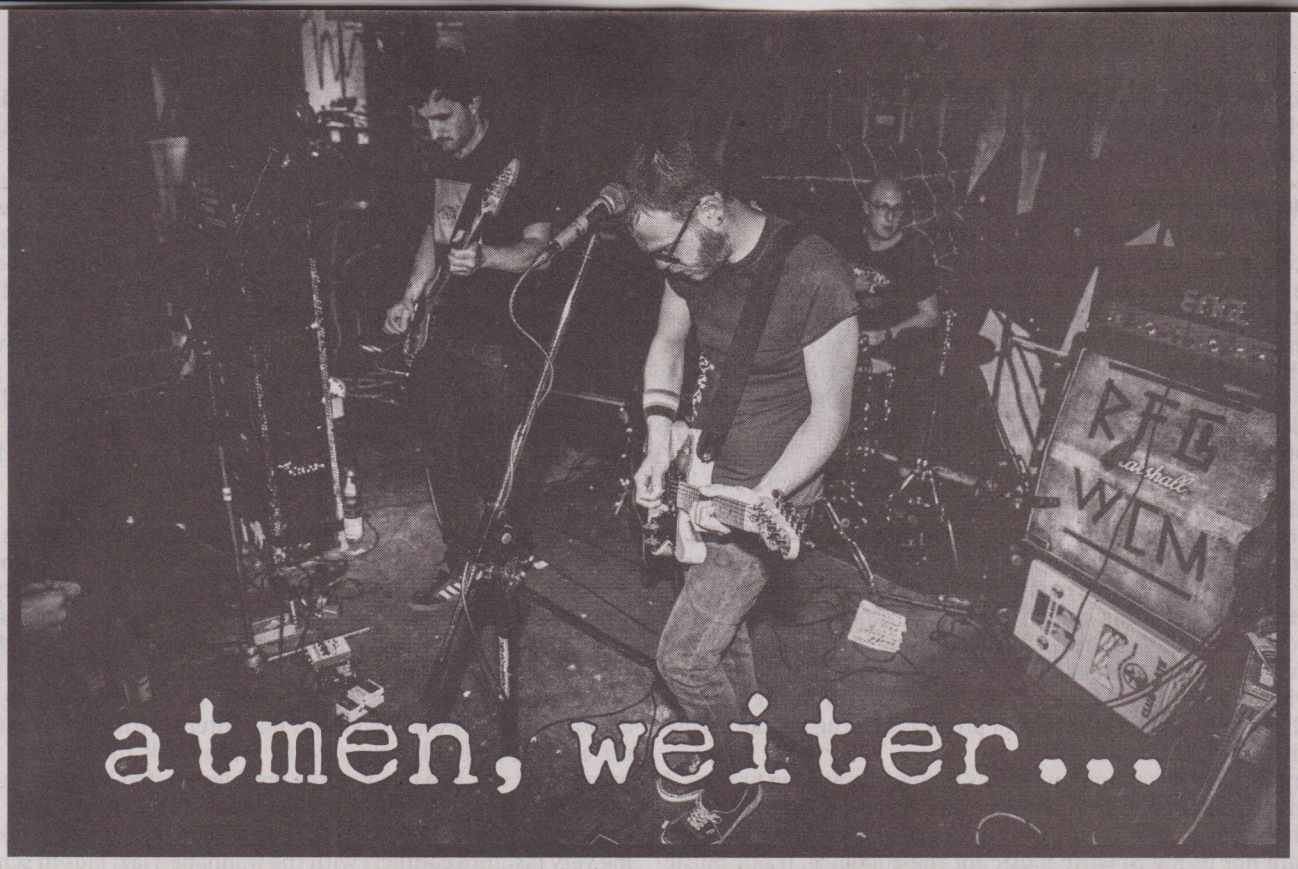


atmen, weiter...

atmen, weiter... is a German punk band from the small town of Landau in southern Germany. Since their founding in 2013, the band was influenced by varied bands like Germany's Oma Hans, Katzenstreik, and Pascow, plus the sounds of Fugazi, At The Drive-In, Daitro, and Mclusky. Big names and a wild mixture of different sounds. As the band enters the stage in the former prison and now self-organized project "Klapperfeld" in the center of Frankfurt / Main, the first guitar strums set the crowd in motion and even more people fill the oppressive basement of the former deportation prison. The following lyrics toss topics like the daily struggle as an individual within the omnipresent expectations and demands of the surrounding society, the hurtful and vulnerable insecurities evoked as part of dealing between two people and the anger, fear, desperation, and loss of self-efficacy one is due to suffer from those conditions. The guitar sounds sometimes sounds harsh and biting and sometimes almost kittenish, the melodies carrying the inner conflict of the singer. The drums and the bass on their part form a massive and punchy foundation, inevitably causing the audience to dance. Gigs like this one have granted the band a small and growing fanbase, resulting in the latest climax: Just before the exit of founding member and bass player Joshua in 2016, the band recorded their debut LP Leichtigkeit des Scheins *(*Ease of Appearance*) in the RAMA-studios in Mannheim and released it in November 2017 on Meta-Matter-Records and 30 Kilo Fieber Records. Since then Oli (guitar and vocals), Höbi (drums and backing vocals), and Yann (bass and backing vocals) went on to play gigs all over Germany and are heading to the studio soon for their next record. We talked to the band shortly before the gig in Frankfurt.*

Interview by Helena Pauen and Philipp Hofmann.
Photos by Fabian Reichenbach.

MRR: The flyer for tonight labels you as hardcore punk, but I've also read emo or screamo on other posters. You're hard to place in those specific labels, but there's no doubt to you referring to yourself as punks. What does punk mean to you?
Höbi: I see punk as a very fluid label when it comes to concrete actions. It depends on your personal situation. You can protest and reject society as a whole thing and do as you want, as much as I work a full time job and play over 30 concerts a year with two bands. Both are equally fine and appealing to me. After all, I guess it is a lot about being aware of your own will and needs and not trying to fit into given expectations.
Oli: Yep, it is a lot about having your own opinion, and letting that resonate in your actions and decisions. It's about living a lifestyle far away from any given mainstream, critically dealing with society, environment and politics, and standing up to things you don't like. I also try to show great empathy towards others. Punk definitely is pro-feminism and LGBTQ and anti-fascist. In terms of music, I heavily support the idea of DIY, like organizing concerts and recordings, as well as writing and publishing fanzines as an elementary aspect of the cultural spread of punk. I draw a lot of strength from my punk lifestyle and wouldn't get through the day without having the opportunity to live my life like that.
Yann: It's a form of provocation in the best way. The classic punks attack the definition of societal beauty standards and the meritocracy but also nearly every aspect of people questioning given opinions and mainstream life choices. The idea of DIY

freed the creative aspect from the decisions of a few major record labels and helped a lot of cool musicians to simply have fun in making music. So that's quite an important impact of punk.

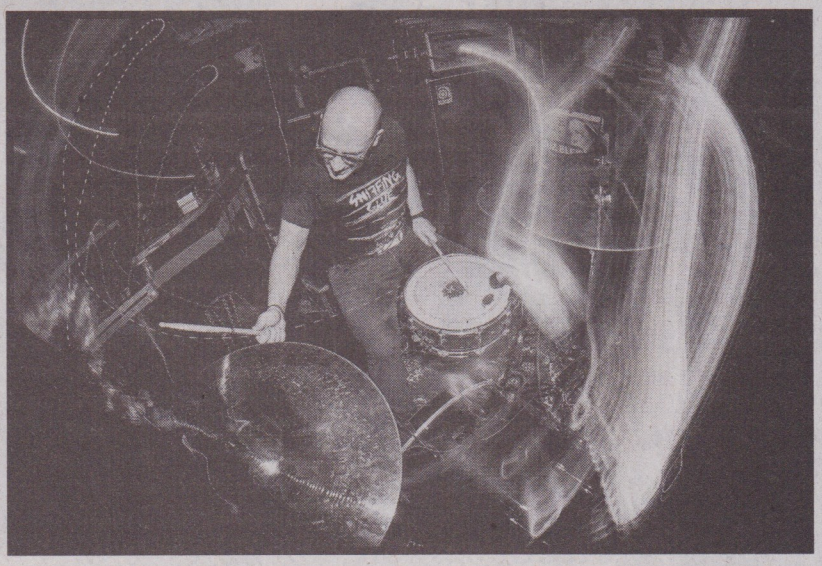
MRR: How is your work inspired by those thoughts?
Oli: To pick up Yann's point: it's developing in the creative process by writing songs and lyrics and arranging artwork for tapes as much as posters and flyers. We always have and will put a lot of effort in those aspects of our work. I'm also very close connected to the lyrics of all the songs. You can tell really quickly whether someone only sings some words that rhyme nicely or if they have a foundation for what they're saying. And as the punk attitude shapes a lot of the topics that are on my mind, it inspires the songwriting in a strong way.
Höbi: I think we wouldn't be a band without the ideas of punk. It's as simple as three friends picking up instruments and starting to write and play music together, because they don't want to play in any of those cover bands. We really want to have full control over every aspect of our music and every other aspect of being a band. Of course, this implies that we do almost everything on our own, like our web presence, booking, and tapes, and that we prefer playing in a occupied house in front of 30 people over playing in a big club in front of 300 people just for the money. We really want to support those cool projects and the people taking effort to defend this lifestyle.
Yann: We also never limit ourselves in the songwriting process. I cannot remember us dropping an idea because of the fear that it might not fit into the genre or the expectations of our audience. We are not trying to write music for the audience. If our music happens to suit the people in front of the stage: great.

MRR: You recorded your album in a studio, would you see that conflicting with your idea of DIY?
Oli: That was a long discussion. We recorded our demo tape completely DIY in our rehearsal room and made and sold the tapes all on our own because of our strong belief in the ideas and impact of DIY.
Höbi: The idea to record in the studio emerged after meeting Tobi from RAMA Studios. We were really impressed by his work for other bands and felt like he could support us expressing our music. At this point it became sure that our bass player Joschy would leave the band, and we wanted to keep something from the years we shared.
Yann: Also we paid the record all on our own and decided with which label we would cooperate. We found some really nice people at Meta-Matters and 30-Kilo-Fieber that supported our decisions instead of trying to force us into something.
Oli: Yes, we definitely had full control over every aspect and are totally satisfied with the outcome.

MRR: I can agree with that. You're all around 30 years old now, but I guess you didn't start as punks out of the womb. How did you make your way into the scene and the lifestyle?
Yann: I'm from a very small village, and at first I listened a lot of popular music and the shittiest German hip hop. *[laughter]* When the older sister of my best friend showed us Green Day, Blink-182 and NOFX, we were instantly awed. Suddenly we had a way to express our anger and discontent with circumstances we weren't even slightly able to grasp back then. From that moment, it was like two months until we started learning guitar and drums, formed a band and played our first shows. That was how we came in touch with the scene. The attitude of punk led me very fast into conflicts with the wannabe-Nazi kids in school, sometimes even fights—my mom wasn't very happy.
Höbi: For me it was an older sibling, too. I shared a room with my brother until he moved out at the age of nineteen. He was five years older than me and had a quite good taste in music. He gave me my very first punk CDs when I was around ten years old: NOFX, Green Day, the Offspring, but mostly German punk bands. For me it started with the music at first, then the political aspects gained more weight after I left the village and moved to a bigger town.
Oli: I came in touch with punk at the early age of six. There was a group of young punks in the village I lived and I was fascinated by their colored hair and mohawks. At the age of twelve I bought my first punk LP and fell completely for punk. Sounds very pathetic, but it really gave my life a new meaning and me a lot of support.

MRR: How did this go on until today, as you became older? Can you live punk in your daily life?
Höbi: I go to a lot of concerts and am really interested in the musical development for sure. I also organized a lot of concerts with some friends, but lately all the good locations in the city I live got closed, so we're searching for new ones. On the other side, I also play a lot of concerts, and it's perfect to keep in touch with a lot of really nice people and bands.
Oli: I try to read a lot about punk, like fanzines and biographies, and I listen to punk on a daily basis. I'm always excited to find new musicians. I am strictly opposed to the exploitation of animals and have been vegan for eight years, after being vegetarian for another eight years before that. To see living beings forced against their will is something that gets me upset really fast and caused a lot of discussions over the years.
Yann: I am a person who questions a lot of things and always tries to understand how everything works. I guess I was a pain in the ass for my parents, as they had to answer a lot of questions and often found the leftovers of technical devices I deconstructed and broke in the matter of understanding them. I kept that curiosity and started studying sociology due to it. I always hate to get simple answers to complex topics and therefore I work in a

club that is run DIY and offers a lot of opportunities to engage in political discussions and actions. That's, by the way, the reason I met the other two guys, as Landau isn't that big and in the end all the lefties and punks meet at this club.



MRR: You mentioned American bands before as part of your punk socialization, and the influence of American culture in Germany is definitely remarkable. What is your view on the American punk scene?
Höbi: So far I have never left Europe before, and so I only know American punk music from vinyl, CDs, and tapes. I read and watched a lot of biographies and films about American bands. I would really like to know how hard it is for bands in America to play shows and go on tour. I would also really like to go to America and get the chance to go to concerts of bands that I couldn't see in Germany as they're not big enough to go on tour in Europe.
Oli: The American punk scene and the many good and diverse bands within it is something that influenced me a lot. Like Höbi said before: it would be amazing to have a chance to get in touch with the American punk scene and culture, to see specific places and bands live. So far I couldn't afford a trip to the US, someday maybe. The *non plus ultra* would definitely be the possibility to meet the people who form that scene in person and play shows in America.
Yann: Ah yes, not much to add, American bands were and are a big influence in my musical work since the beginning. And also a lot of not especially punk-related stuff. I read every book of John Irving at a minimum twice, and his view on societal taboos and many other topics had quite an impact on me. At the moment, I guess that the scene in America is driven a lot by the current political climate, and I would be really interested in getting to know a lot of songs dealing with those topics.

MRR: On the other hand you have a close look on the German punk scene. How would you describe it to people from the States, and what are developments you see?
Höbi: There definitely is a scene, a big scene with a lot of very good bands and supercool projects, occupied houses, and much more. It's even so many bands that it sometimes is quite hard to get gigs. *[laughter]* I sometimes write about 80 emails for a tour of four days. As I organized a lot of concerts in the past, I also know how you get such a large amount of requests from all those bands, that it's mostly impossible to answer them all in time. Sometimes it feels a bit like most of the gigs are arranged by people knowing each other very well, and if you haven't played in a town it's a bit harder to get a gig there.

When it comes to the music, there are like two dozen German punk bands I really worship for what they do and see as really defining the creative development of the punk music in Germany. On the downside, there are also bands I can't stand, and really don't get why people fall for their dull shit.
Yann: Definitely very diverse, I couldn't tell if there's any special dress code or much limitations in the matters of musical expression. My biggest matter are lyrics, as I really often feel bored by lyrics that lack a real expression or just feel like empty phrases. But lately we played with a lot of really appealing bands. If you're interested I would recommend Huelse, Loser Youth, and Hysterese. Each band has a really different approach, but they all have really good music, lyrics and energetic performances.
Oli: We meet so much people that spend a lot of time and effort into a lot of great projects. There are so many DIY locations and clubs run by a hand of motivated folks and almost everyone is incredible kind and heart-warming supportive in their way. I also feel like the latest growth of xenophobia and blind nationalism in Germany was echoed by a growth of political engagement in the scene.

MRR: One last question. As an all-male band, what do you think might be a reason that this is a quite regular thing with punk bands?
Yann: That is really hard to say. When I grew up, I faced a lot of stereotypical roles in the music business, as the tough roles were exclusively played by male artists and the female artists were all depicted as very beautiful and fragile. Also in a lot of bands, whenever there were women in them they were really exposed and praised as something special. It was not until I came in touch with punk that I got used to see women on stage that didn't give a fuck about what expectations the audience had and that enabled me to learn to soften the old societal imagery. I really want to play music and the only thing that matters for me about the people I play in a band is that we get along and share that fever for the music. Of course, this doesn't mean that it is as easy as that; stereotypes are reproduced every day, and we can only hope that someday the continuing work of all the people opposing this cycle will erode the given restrictions.
Höbi: I play in another band that isn't all-male. And it is really no difference to anyone. It is mostly about being a group of people sharing their hobby, and we also didn't face any audience that ever made a big deal out of it. But in terms of the overall society, I would guess that the established clichés might keep some women from being in a band. But as a lot of punk bands also are all-female and, thinking of strong examples like the riot grrrl movement, I would see punk more as a genre that supports emancipation and empowerment than oppressing it, without being totally detached from the patriarchal society. There's still way to go.
Oli: We wouldn't reject a female member in the band. I am enamored by so many great bands like Bikini Kill and Hole and, as I always saw the real musical genius in Kim Deal when it comes to the Pixies. I would always name the Breeders when I'm asked for my favorite bands. When we were looking for a replacement on the bass, there was the problem that Landau isn't that big and we hardly knew anyone to fit in the band but Yann, who we had known for some years. So that sealed the deal. From playing shows with a lot of great bands, we know so many great musicians regardless of their gender. I couldn't imagine it affecting my recognition of good music.

atmenweier.bandcamp.com

I don't remember when I met Gordo and Michi from Antifaces. One thing is for certain: I met them through their old band, Nunhex. Did I become friends with them when Nunhex played a house show where they brought in a massive bag of dildos? Did I meet them before or after Nunhex's singer Alex Nuñez threw a brick into the audience during 305 Fest at Miami's Churchill's Pub? Who fucking knows—they were a chaotic band, and so was my general experience with the Miami punk scene during that time.

Because my experiences with Miami involved some really fucking noisy and abrasive bands, including Nunhex, you can imagine my surprise when I first heard Gordo and Michi's newest band, Antifaces. Gone were the D-beats and the complex (but brief) song structures. Replacing them was a style that emphasized songwriting and melody. I was confused at first, but I was quickly won over.

I wanted to learn more about Michi and Gordo (who are now married!) and what lead to the drastic stylistic changes between Nunhex and Antifaces. I spoke with them not long after they played some fests this summer, and learned that the couple are the main driving force of the band—they write all of the music and lyrics together. Not included was their current drummer Robert King. During our phone call, I got my answers about the change from Nunhex to Antifaces, and had a pretty rewarding conversation as well.

Interview by Joan DeToro.
Photos by Jamie Salazar.

MRR: What bands have you played in?
Michi: In the past I've played in Guerrilleros de Nadie. I used to play in Nunhex, but we're about to start playing again. I'm in Antifaces, and I play bass in Flores Robadas and sometimes in Drul.
Gordo: I played in Eztorbo, I played in Gorilla Pussy, Nunhex, No Dice, Drul and Antifaces and plenty more I can't remember right now.

MRR: I got to know y'all through Nunhex. What happened with Nunhex? Why did you feel the need to start Antifaces?
Gordo: We stopped playing because it got too rowdy, and we were getting banned from some places here in our hometown. Everyone else started doing different music projects too. We still have a good relationship with each other, we're actually playing a show together in November. We started Antifaces when we were touring the West Coast, and we saw how many bands were playing in Spanish. In the past, we had some bands sing in Spanish where we are from, in Miami. We felt like it was time to start doing things again and more serious especially since we're older and we know how to have a band together. To go on tour and stuff like that.

MRR: What was it like going on the West Coast and seeing all of these other bands singing in Spanish?
Michi: It was inspiring! There's really great bands out there. We're pretty well connected now, and we have a lot of friends there.

MRR: What bands influenced you in terms of what you write for Antifaces?
Michi: My personal main influences you can see from miles away—the '90s hardcore punk band from Argentina Penadas Por la Ley and Eskorbuto from Spain, especially when it comes to a lot of the lyrics, which are a little more on the down side.
Gordo: There's also Suicidas from Spain.

MRR: You just recently played Latinx fest up in New York, right? How was that?
Gordo: It was great. We got to meet a lot of different people from all different states and countries. We played that same fest two years ago and it was really nice to see a lot of old friends, too. Just learning how the scene is here (NYC)... In Miami, for example, there's lot of Latinos, but they don't speak Spanish. Or they don't care about it. It's a different culture, even though we're in the same country, it's definitely a different culture.

MRR: Do you want to expand on that?
Gordo: We got invited to play this fest two years ago in New York, and it was really a nice experience. There were people there from Mexico, people from Colombia, from Spain, from Peru. In Miami there's a large community of people from Peru too.
Michi: We're really really hungover, we've been on the road for the past two weeks, we're in bed right now as we talk. Sorry, I'm tired.

MRR: That's the punk life, for sure. Gordo, you mentioned it's a different world for Latinx people and Latinx punk in America, could you expand on that a little bit?
Michi: You probably expect from where we live you would see that a bigger Latino punk community; it's not like that. Not a lot of bands sing in their native tongue. So when we get to travel to places like Chicago, New York, or California, we felt like we were at home in a way. Because we felt like we were with people that we could relate to. We get to relate to people from Spain, South America.

MRR: How'd you find out about those bands a lot of those bands from South America or Spain?
Gordo: I mean, growing up it was mostly through punks. The internet had a lot to do with it and especially nowadays, but back then when we were like thirteen or fourteen it was mostly punks. Like, we heard of a lot of bands from Peru, or bands from Argentina for example, but living here in Miami. Even a band from Colombia (I.R.A.), they would tour Miami a lot, too. We would never heard of those bands if we didn't live here.

MRR: You recently went to South America, yeah? Tell me about your tour there.
Gordo: In May last year, we went to Colombia and Peru and Argentina and we had a blast. Bogotá is one of the most beautiful cities. We have a lot of friends over there, and there are great bands over there too.

MRR: Did you see anything there that seemed similar to what you experience in Miami, in terms of the punk scene? Were there things that were different?
Michi: Actually, there's really a lot of activity in the DIY scene there. There's spaces where there's a lot of silk screening. A lot of punks own their spaces already, like their own tattoo shop or like a place where they sell DIY jewelry or records.

MRR: What were some of your favorite things that you experienced?
Michi: For example, one of the coolest places was in Colombia, called Rat Trap. They have like what, three stories? Like a punk castle *[laughter]* that's all separated into these different rooms. They silkscreen things from giant flyers to shirts to books and other things. It was pretty impressive to see punks get together and build that up from the ground.
MRR: So I don't understand Spanish, can you talk about what some of your songs are about?
Michi: We have some songs that are more on the positive side and some others more on the negative side. A lot of what our songs talk about is everyday life, politics, drugs. Sometimes it's like missing our friends from far away, talking about police brutality, you know. A little bit of everything.

MRR: Can you pick one of your songs and talk about specifically the lyrics to one of them?
Michi: Yeah, one of the songs we talk about, which we just finished recording a new album called *Calavera No Chilla*, and one song from it's called "Como Moscas," it means "Like Flies." Now that we're older, our friends keep passing, and its usually due to mental illness or substance abuse, which is something that most of us struggle with and it could happen to any of us at any given moment. Like flies means they're dropping like flies.

MRR: I don't really know what the punk scene is really like in Miami anymore, but from what you're saying, it sounds like there's a pretty large drug problem there in south Florida?
Michi: Yeah, very big.

MRR: Is it related to the pharmaceutical companies nearby?
Michi: Lots of cocaine and shitty heroin cut with fentanyl.

MRR: It seems like that's happening everywhere... Is there a community organizing going on with in Miami to fight against this crisis?
Michi: Honestly, no. Not that I'm aware of. Miami has so much chaos especially when it's surrounding drugs I really haven't seen any organization trying to help within our punk community.

MRR: That makes sense, the city is super sprawling, seems like it wouldn't it be easy to have a centralized place for punks or for some community organizing.
Gordo: There used to back when we were growing up, we had The Firefly. Like we'd go to a DIY house, they would do workshops, they would teach kids or young punks how to "behave," how to do shows. They had an anarchist library, they had other stuff, they had a structure and people we would look up to back in day... But I haven't seen any other people try to do that.
Michi: I think she's talking about organizations that have been trying to prevent drug abuse. I think I've heard about, how you could test your

drugs before consuming. I think there's some people going around giving supplies, especially after we've lost somebody in our community recently. I was talking to one of my friends and she was telling me about all of that. And I didn't know about that, maybe it's something we can start looking into, you know. Or into kits, stuff like that to try your drugs before and test it. It's only like two bucks, I was told.

MRR: Gordo, I think you were just talking about the Miami scene in the past and how there were no DIY spaces where people were teaching other a things doing shows and stuff like that. What happened there, why do you think that doesn't happen anymore?

Michi: I guess a lot of people had their head over their shoulders, decided they wanted to move away and learn new things. When you live in Miami, in the bottom of the Florida peninsula, a lot people get fed up after living here for a few years. They feel the need to move to other cities. So then a lot of people that are a part of the community left, but now it kinda in a low. It just goes up and down, really. Some people move in. Some people move out, which contributes to the lack of DIY community... I don't know why there's nothing in between.

MRR: It's really similar to experiences that so many other Florida punks have, where they left Florida for other things. Part of it for me was the way that peninsula was separate from the rest of the state. You have in been in Miami for quite some time now, right?

Michi: Today marks seventeen years that I moved to Miami from Buenos Aires, Argentina.

MRR: Cool. It just seems that the way Miami is the bottom of the Florida peninsula means it's far away from what's happening to the rest of the country. Do you think having people leave is the only way it affects you?

Michi: No no, there are people here now that are in our community, and they've never traveled the country. They've never been outside what they see. They're not inspired enough. We still have our little organization, where we book punk shows, and go on tour. We're still in the middle of organizing a DIY festival for three days, it's going to be amazing. We're still DIY, and we're still doing our shit just a little by little, we have to pick up more. Literally, we just had some friends open up a new record store, that was a great thing, because we only had the one thing but now we have more. Some things are becoming better, you know.

Gordo: Miami is a huge city, you know. Every time we travel the country or whatever everything is old, and you go to Miami, everything is new.

MRR: That makes sense. All of these cities, like Jacksonville, there's so many things that draw people to them, especially people with disposable income. So many people move there to retire, or they get some jobs doing some sort of like events related work. I imagine that must affect Miami pretty dramatically within the punk scene.

Michi: It's kinda crazy 'cause Miami is suppose to be a place where you go to retire, but it's also a party city. Miami is kind of trashy and really expensive, you know. And sometimes people may use coming down here as an excuse to do shitty things, but we get a lot of great people come through as well, it's good to keep it flowing, it affects the punk scene in a way that bands may not last long enough to release anything,

or be able to tour before a member leaves, but that's just life though.

MRR: Yeah, that make sense. Do you want to talk more about what the current Miami punk scene looks like?

Gordo: Right now, it's going through extreme lows, but we go through highs too. Right now, it's coming up, people are talking about doing something, like starting a new DIY venue, trying to start a new band, a new record label. It's starting to happen, that's why we're trying to push this fest were doing in November. Like we've been trying to bring bands down, and it's been working. Nowadays we would have two to three events happening in a week. So what we've wanting to happen here is finally happening but we're not ready for it, it isn't as ready as we'd like it to be. Now we'd have maybe three shows happening in the same night, but they're still kinda empty. They're not as packed as it used to be years ago back, when we would have just one show with all of our friends bands. Whether the bands were ska or crust or hardcore, it was always fun.

MRR: I was really hoping you would talk about more bands that are active in Miami right now.

Gordo: Right now? *[laughter]* I don't know. I don't want to forget anyone, and then get called out. Some newer bands are Que Asko!, Rhino, Jackal, Dextro, Haute Tension, Prison Warder...

Michi: It's hard to think of bands that are just from Miami, but some of the bands that play here are from Broward County, or a mixture of people from both Miami and Broward County. One of the newest ones is Obsidian, and it's kinda like goth. There's a band called Death Lottery that recently came out, the Nightmare, which is punk, but the singer just moved to Orlando, so who knows if it's still considered a Miami band. *[laughter]*

Gordo: There's Las Nubes, which we used to call SMVT. They're like a lo-fi garage, but they're good. Testokra's around again too, they just started playing again. Crud's doing well too.

MRR: Why do you think there's all these people going to less shows?

Gordo: I don't know, I wish I had an answer. Miami has gotten really expensive to live, too. Gentrification has hit really hard. They sent us a letter saying we have to move within 30 days, they were tearing down the building that we were living in to build a skyrise.

Michi: We had to move in the same neighborhood, so we can commute to our jobs and everything, we have to pay almost $600 more to live in our own fucking neighborhood. The same thing happened with the Firefly. That was the headquarters of our community. They tore that house down so they can build a parking lot.

MRR: It's so shitty what gentrification is doing to communities everywhere. You see people driven out so they can put in more expensive housing like that. I know in California, there are people who organize specifically to fight against gentrification. Is there a similar effort happening in Miami?
Gordo: No, not that I'm aware of. I don't know really, I'm sure there is. We haven't kept in contact with a lot of people about that. We've just been focusing more on bringing in bands and music and working too many hours to stay afloat.

MRR: The last time I went to Miami to see shows where are happening in either houses or at Churchill's Pub. Where do people throw shows now?
Gordos: Churchill's. *[laughter]* There's another bar called Las Rosas, they're doing really well too, and they're helping us out with booking shows. There's also an art space, Space Mountain, and they do all ages shows. It helps with bringing young kids into shows too. It's a safe space too for them. They do talks too. There's no house shows anymore at least as of right now.

MRR: There's no house shows anymore? What happened?
Gordo: I don't know. For an example, my friends' place, Grown Up house, unfortunately got caught on fire during the storm, the hurricane.

MRR: Oh my God.
Gordo: Yeah all the people there had to move away.

MRR: That's awful. What about other houses?
Michi: Well some people who ran house venues moved away, and others have living situations where they just can't do shows. Other people in the scene are too young and live with their parents, and others are too old and live with their children. But it's not always like this. Sometimes we have three to four houses available for shows.

MRR: You've mentioned a few times that you book shows as Hardcore For Punx. You're booking a DIY fest in Miami, can you talk a little bit more about that?
Gordo: We've been booking shows there for the past ten years, we're a little legit but really, four years ago we started trying to do fly-ins with bands from California. In the past we've put on 305 Fest. But this time decided that we wanted to start from zero. It's called Ballbusters On Parade. We didn't want to to get one huge band, but get a lot current bands that are really active right now. That we know that'll do well. We're gonna have a three day festival and a beach party. There's bands coming in all the way from Chicago, New York, from Philly from Nashville, it's all homies and people that we've known forever pretty much, which is great.

MRR: Yeah, that's great. When will that happen?
Gordo: It's November 2nd, 3rd and 4th.

MRR: Can you say who's playing so far?
Gordo: Yeah, yeah, yeah. The fest is already announced. Devil Master is playing, Drugcharge, Final from Colombia, Penetrode, Nunhex, S.P.I.C. from New York and many more.

MRR: There's been so many punk fests that have been happening within the last ten or fifteen years, and it's really blowing up and have been blowing up for quite some time. Have you noticed things from other punk fests that seem to be working out well? And have you seen anything you don't want to follow suit with?
Gordo: Yeah, we just went to Skull Fest for example, I was playing there with a band from Colombia, Lupus. Something I would do, for example, is give bands weekend passes, so they wouldn't pay for the shows they're not playing, but would get a discount, that's because we live in a smaller community, you'd be playing all of these towns maybe you play for ten people, or fifteen people in a little town, or maybe 200 people for a big town. It kinda works out for bands too. To go to these fests and play big cities. It's like a big family reunion. Like, we went to Skull Fest this weekend, and it was like we saw all of our friends. It was a great time, awesome bands, and that's what we want to do in Miami too.

MRR: One of you mentioned you're working on a new album, do you want to talk about that?
Michi: Sure, we've been writing this album for the past two years. These eight songs are gonna come out on an a 12". It's hardcore punk, with some melodies, some post-punk influences.

MRR: For sure. When I've listened to you in the past, while I feel like it's sonically varied. It still sounded distinctly Antifaces to me. Tell me about the record—did you record it in Miami or somewhere else?
Michi: Actually, we did record in Miami. With our friend Moe who also played in Nunhex with us.

MRR: What are your plans for after the fest and the record?
Gordo: We're playing This Is Austin Not That Great and going on more trips. Most likely going to Colombia.

Look out for news about Antifaces' new 12" at antifaces.bandcamp.com.

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Revolutionary Mothering
Edited by Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens and Mai'a Williams
PM Press, 2016
250 pages | $17.95

I devoured this book as I am getting ready to move my kids to college (on opposite coasts). I think hard about the last eighteen years of being a solo mami and a teen parent, and I am ready to be without the daily responsibilities of caring for my twins for the first time since I was seventeen. This book may have been particularly resonant for me, but believe me, it is a necessary read for you, too.

Alexis Pauline Gumbs, China Martens, and Mai'a Williams gift us with a rich anthology that approaches mothering abundantly. This is an expansive book—expansive as generous, expansive as far reaching and ambitious. It uplifts stories of all kinds of mothers: young, adoptive, immigrant, blood and chosen, poor, Black, South Asian, Chinese American, Latina, trans, and more. It includes the voices of mothers of babies, and mothers of adults. It looks at mothering as political act, "the mothering of children in oppressed groups, and especially mothering to end war, to end capitalism, to end homophobia and to end patriarchy as a queer thing...a good thing...a necessary thing,...and a crucial and dangerous thing to do." It also opens up the category of mothering to any caring done to nurture, preserve ,and uplift life, not limited to the business of childbearing or childrearing.

While nuanced and multifaceted, *Revolutionary Mothering* is well held together by having a clear centering and aim. The book spells out its lineage multiple times, in June Jordan's Black Feminist Futurist envisioning of mothering, in the conversations nurtured through the Allied Media Conference in Detroit, and the US Social Forum, and in the ongoing work of collectives such as Regeneratión and Kids City. *Revolutionary Mothering* centers mothers at the margin, especially Black Queer Mothers because, "centering the more precarious within society...better supports everyone of us to make an improvement which will really make a difference."

The book employs a wide variety of formats (essay, photos, poems, drawings), which allows a more nuanced capturing of the multifaceted nature of motherhood, of the profound joys and also the tensions and paradoxes of caring for a child. In *Revolutionary Mothering* you will find intellectual / theoretical approaches to mothering, as in Alexis Pauline Gumbs's excellent essay "M / other Ourselves"which lays out beautifully the interweaving of queer theory, Black feminist thinking, and argues that mothering is a queer thing. Another gem of sharp intellectual probing is Cynthia Dewi Oka's "Mothering as Revolutionary Praxis," which lays out ten steps toward revolutionary homemaking. You will also find pieces that dive into the visceral, disjointed and messy aspects of motherhood. Terri Nilliasca's essay about the adoption of their child from the Philippines and "you look too young to be a mom," excerpts from posts on the website GirlMom.com are two of my favorites.

I am hard pressed to find anything about this book that I would change, but I would like to include a note about language. It feels sometimes in contrast to the people who *Revolutionary Mothering* is aiming to center. I remember as a teen immigrant mom with limited education and English comprehension, trying to read political books and pamphlets and being completely alienated by the lofty language and by how much I was expected to already know in order to understand some zine about anarchy or dismantling capitalism. I don't think I could have made it through this book. I wish the book contained more essays by mothers with less formal education, by mothers who are service job workers and less from artist / activist / scholar moms.

But do not let that discourage you. As I said before, this is an essential read. In short, the world could use some serious mothering, and, reading this book might just inspire you to do the kind of mothering that makes you to push forward toward a less fucked up world!

—Chiara Galimberti

Prisoner 115: Simón Radowitzky
By Agustín Comotto
AK Press, 2018
273 pages | $26.00

This book is a graphic novel biography of Simón Radowitzky (1891-1956), an anarchist and political prisoner who became the center of a massive campaign calling for his freedom. His life story is an odyssey that spans three continents. As told by Agustín Comotto, Radowitzky spent most of his early life fleeing. His Jewish family fled their home village in Ukraine to escape anti-semitic violence and he then fled Russia as a teenager to escape political persecution because of his involvement in anarchism and labor organizing. When persecuted again as a refugee in Argentina by an anti-immigrant police force, he saw his childhood oppressors in them. He refused to bow this time and sought justice following the state-sanctioned massacre of labor protestors—I will omit precise spoilers for those unfamiliar with the case to discover in this book. Spared execution because of his young age, he was imprisoned for his actions and subjected to violent abuse by his jailers. The story alternates between his childhood and his imprisonment, emphasizing how he views his oppressors as alike.

Much of the story came from Augustin Souchy's *Una vida por un ideal*, an account of Radowitzky's life written by his personal friend who had been helping Radowitzky to write his own story. Radowitzky died before completing the project. With limited records of the case,

the author extrapolated, especially in regard to Radowitzky's personal life, which was only partially pieced together through records. The most poignant invention was a lost childhood love named Lyudmyla, a fellow anarchist and the educated daughter of the locksmith under whom he apprenticed. She leaves out Kropotkin's *The Conquest of Bread*, a classic work in the anarchist canon, for the young Radowitzky to discover and transform his childhood anguish into militant politics. In dire moments throughout his life, even decades after they are separated, the fictional Radowitzky speaks to her, almost in prayer.

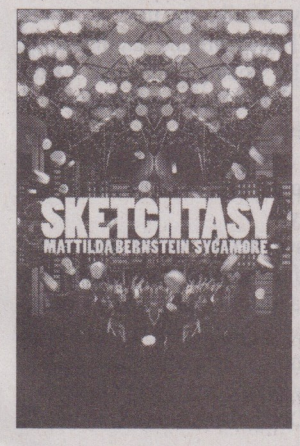
Perhaps the most documented part of the true story of Radowitzky is the enormous public push for his pardon. The author imagines the concerns of his jailors and how the public outcry would shape their treatment of the prisoner. The fictional account grounds itself in reality by providing pictures of *La Protesta*, an Argentinian anarchist publication and describing the efforts of the anarchist and poet Salvadora Medina Onrubia who used her powerful husband's position as a journalist to advocate for Radowitzky's freedom.

The choice of the graphic novel as a medium—coupled with the romanticized story of an embattled idealist—calls to mind the heroism of classic superhero comics. Radowitzky's face is depicted as lengthening and grown hollow in the cheeks as he ages and endures suffering. Most of the illustrations are black-and-white, but red splashes across many panels signifying violence in blood itself or with a crimson sky after a night of violence. Radowitzky repeatedly laments that all the world is a series of cages within larger cages—even when speaking from outside prison walls. When not within a literal prison, he is still trapped within the constraints of imperfect governments and the physical world. Birds are used as a symbol for freedom; near the book's conclusion, he releases a rooftop coop full of pigeons.

Raised in Argentina by a leftist family who told him tales of idealism and political oppression which influenced his interest in anarchist history, author and illustrator Agustín Comotto cites the Spanish Civil War and the unjust executions of Sacco and Vanzetti as interests. He grew up familiar with a photograph of the long-faced Radowitzky whose dour countenance unsettled him. The obsessive research that went into this book took him years, and he writes in the afterward that the completion of the book unburdened him of the weight of the anarchist's troubled life.

Why do these stories still matter? As Radowitzky was oppressed by anti-semitic Cossacks in his youth, he was mistreated by corrupt, anti-refugee police as an adult. Power dynamics exist throughout history regardless of what group occupies each role. Take this away: Oppressors can be challenged. Political prisoners still exist. Campaigns for their pardon can be effective. And those who dedicate their lives to improving the world may be remembered and honored.

—Caitlin Xavier



Sketchtasy
By Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore
Arsenal Pulp Press. 2018
268 pgs. | $17.95

Alexa, a twenty-one-year-old gender-nonconforming queen living in Boston during the mid-'90s, is at the center of the new novel, *Sketchtasy* by Mattilda Bernstein Sycamore (author of numerous fiction and nonfiction titles including *So Many Ways To Sleep Badly* and previously, the *MRR* column, "Assimilate My Purse"). In a story that moves swiftly between devastating emotional lows, scorching sarcasm, and moments of dance floor and / or drug-induced euphoria, Alexa is a character searching for place in the hollowed out rainbow shell of gay culture. A sort-of post-coming-of-age novel, *Sketchtasy* offers a truth-telling, nostalgia-free look at a young queer person's entre into what should be, but isn't, a welcoming gay, urban world.

As the novel begins, Alexa is living in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston in a Victorian flat with good friend Polly and too many of the wrong kind of roommates. The apartment is large and cheap, and yet there isn't enough room to grow. Music with a good beat helps, going out helps, and drugs, of course, help to make this situation bearable. Much-loathed roommates and even straight, frat boy-types can be transformed into something else altogether with a hit of this or that and some good house music beats on the stereo. Soon, Alexa and Polly escape to live in East Boston, where they are terrorized on the streets and on the T (actually this happens everywhere they go in Boston). A twelve-years-old asks, "Are you gay?" Alexa replies, "Honey, I'm a faggot."

With Alexa, Sycamore creates a new vision of what a queen can be. Alexa doesn't embody gay stereotypes; instead, she rips them apart. She calls out racism, classism, and misogyny among her gay friends—ways of thinking and being that, in certain gay circles, can be a given. She throws shade at mainstays of mainstream gay culture—*Absolutely Fabulous* and *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* fans be warned! Most of all, she rejects any kind of conformity to the status quo. An acquaintance tells Alexa, "You can rebel all you want, but there's no way to fight your parents—they're the people that made you. The way you're brought up is the way you're going to be." In a sense, Alexa's whole existence is about fighting against this sentiment, that to be yourself, to be an individual, to be radically different, is impossible in this world. And, sadly, this excludes Alexa from a culture and community that should be available to her.

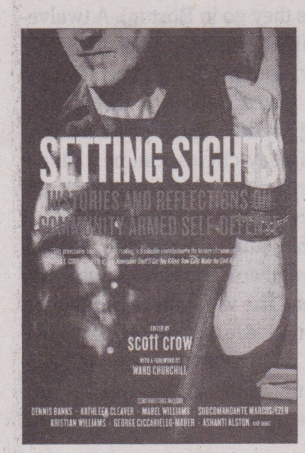
But when being a queen is seen as a gay stereotype, where does that leave Alexa? She's caught between the club kid world and a mostly as yet unknown alternative queer world. There's the club music she lives for (if you're thinking RuPaul or Crystal Waters, think again); the drugs (ecstasy, of course; coke; and Xanax for the come down) that she can't live without; and the overall, over-the-top, outrageousness of her look. And then there's her politics, her desire for accountability, her quest for truth, and her search for a radical queer community. We're all *all-too-familiar* with how queens (read: sissies, fags, i.e. people somewhere on the trans-feminine spectrum) are usually portrayed in mainstream media. If queens are not performing lowest common denominator jokes for straight audiences, then they are the butt of the jokes. But, thankfully, Alexa is not that kind of queen! While she exists in this club kid world, her perspective and her politics put her well outside of that world at the same time. In a novel that tackles childhood sexual abuse, queer family making, sex work dynamics, class issues and more, Alexa is a queen full of complexity and contradictions.

When Polly leaves Boston to return to her Christian fundamentalist cult family, Alexa's best friend Joanna comes from San Francisco and they turn their apartment into a sanctuary of art and music and create a space for talking through everything, and there's a lot to talk about. Alexa realizes that she was sexually abused by her parents and has recently confronted them. Joanna is trying to kick heroin and Alexa tries to be there for her, even stops doing drugs herself, but eventually that relationship unravels, too, leaving Alexa to face the possibility that her closest relationship is with her trick Nate, the one who pays her monthly. Other friends, would-be lovers, drug-dealers, or some combination thereof, continually let her down. After a rough night, she takes stock of her relationships: "I think about how sometimes I feel so lonely talking to the people I love..." And so, drugs become reliable friends. And the dance floor becomes the place where she is valued as a queen, and can even find community around a shared queeniness,

however fleeting it may be.

What *Sketchtasy* comes back to again and again is the loneliness of this struggle of finding place, of finding community. Alexa has ended up in this gay world by default, a world in which she doesn't fit, but since there's nothing else, it's a world she can't exactly escape. It feels bleak, and it is bleak. But queer lives always require imagination to create and sustain, and the club is a place for imagination, and for brief moments, even joy. In Sycamore's stripped-down yet rhythmic style, cut with a strong dose of authenticity, she shows how loneliness and trauma mix with a desire for something different, desire above all else, to create refuge in the unlikeliest of places. She takes us right into the center of it, onto the dance floor, to feel the release of 10,000 queens building a world together.

—Kevin Darling



Setting Sights. Histories and Reflections on Community Armed Self-Defense
Edited by scott crow
PM Press, 2018
336 pages | $24.95

The debate over gun control in the US seems to have faded out lately, but in reality, it keeps burning. The next tragic news will burst it up and the world will echo with it once again. The violence keeps seizing lives. For the most part, these deaths happen inside marginalized and oppressed communities. These people had no voice in life, and many take advantage of their absence to speak in their name. This is how pro- and anti-gun control discourses have silenced minorities, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendents, and their views.

Setting Sights confronts this debate with the ability to re-frame it in its own terms. Snatching the self-defense question out of state territory also means denouncing its monopoly of violence, the racial, class, and gender privileges of its advocates, and brilliantly in this case, encourages a communitarian egalitarian spirit.

Setting Sights is an interesting book even for those people who live in other parts of the world, in different social and cultural circumstances, far from this debate. This is because it invites us to rethink the defense strategies of our liberating projects and brings the creation and support of communities into a central place: self-defense not as an individual reaction but as a collective need. In this, guns may or may not play a role; in fact we can redefine what we consider our weapons, but these reflections open up a field to explore as they push us to consider how we deal with the inevitable violence of law enforcement and reactionary groups.

Any social movement that is able to formulate and carry out a project of its own, opposed to the prevailing system, will soon be forced to defend itself against the aggressions of power and its vassals. The power may try other ways to co-opt the movement, but ultimately, if integrating strategies fail, it will use violence. This threat, which hangs over our heads, is put into relevance in *Setting Sights*.

The book is divided in two sections: the first includes a collection of theory and analytical essays on liberatory community armed self-defense while the second presents historical examples of the 20th and 21st centuries. Anti-fascist activist scott crow is the editor and also pens some of the most remarkable articles. His first article brings us an understanding of the concepts developed later, placing special emphasis on the importance of gender, race, and class issues to develop mechanisms to prevent weapons that reinforce hierarchies and power relations. Later, in the second section, he speaks about his personal experience in supporting the Algiers neighborhood community in New Orleans during attacks by racist militia and the police during the days after Hurricane Katrina.

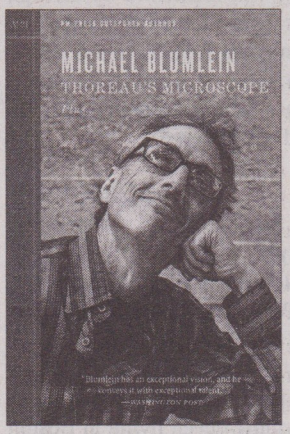
Several voices enrich the debate on community armed self-defense: Angela Y. Davis, Ashanti Alston, Kathleen Cleaver, Ward Churchill, Paul Avrich, Subcomandante Marcos, Dennis Banks, Mabel Williams, Gabriel Kuhn, Akinyele Omowale Umoja, in addition to collective writings by anti-fascist and anti-racist organizations such as Black Lives Matter, Redneck Revolt, Wasp, or Copwatch. They speak to us from their experience and critical thinking.

Perhaps at first glance, after the enriching reading that is the theoretical section of the book, the historical section seems unnecessary and redundant. It takes up more space and falls more easily in an apology of taking arms in scenarios that go beyond self-defense. Even so, as the reader gets into it, the essays become relevant as a collection of important experiences for our history of struggle and resistance. It is a compendium of victories and failures in which the use of guns is a decisive tool in revolutionary processes, but never alone. It is always accompanied by the construction of communities organized in equality and freedom.

However, I can't resist criticizing the chapter on women's involvement in the Spanish Social Revolution. I think it is a mistake to reproduce here a text written by British anti-fascists (including typos in Hispanic names) since there were other groups from Spain that had much closer and accurate memories of these events. It is the article where the author shows the greatest distance from the narrated facts, while other chapters are written in first person or told from primary sources.

Nevertheless, it's still a minor fault in a book that channels its potential in expropriating a debate monopolized by our enemies. In the USA, this is represented by two sides with the same racist, capitalist, and pro-governmental substrate. There and in the rest of the world, wherever there is State, the oppressed communities are deprived of their ability to defend themselves. This is an unsustainable situation for any emancipatory project. *Setting Sights* arms us with arguments but doesn't intend to close the debate; now it's our turn, we have our say and our conclusions must become our actions.

—Hèctor



Thoreau's Microscope
by Michael Blumlein
PM Press, 2018
128 pgs | $14.00

In a gross, lyrical passage from the short story "Know How, Can Do," a roundworm with a human brain beautifully details its urge to mate, "to wrap [it]self around another body, to taste its oozing salts and earthy humors." *Thoreau's Microscope* is full of these moments where body and language intersect, the abstraction of thought contextualized with the guts of physicality.

Author Michael Blumlein is a science fiction writer and actual medical doctor. He's written a number of acclaimed novels, including *The Movement of Mountains*, *The Healer*, and *X, Y*—adapted into feature film in 2004—as well as many short stories, published by Interzone, Omni, and Semiotext(e). *Thoreau's Microscope* is a collection of short works: four stories and the titular essay, along with an "Outspoken Interview," a hallmark of PM Press's Outspoken Authors series. In

these pieces, Blumlein traces a path from an immortal figure brought low by disease to a worm granted sentience by science, with stops at health statistics, cancer, and circumcision along the way. Even at a slim 115 pages, it's quite a trip.

Though Blumlein's previous work tends toward science fiction and horror, these stories feel more like the transrealist work of Rudy Rucker, influenced by poetry and personal experience as much as hard science. Rather than standard-issue SF, this is science *and* fiction, intellectual and emotional in equal parts. All five pieces use biology and language as dual lenses to focus deeply felt stories that ask what it means to be human, right down to the DNA. This results in something close to body horror in grotesque stories like "Y(ou)^{r} Q(ua)^{n}tifi(e)^{d} S(el)^{f}" and "Know How, Can Do," while the other three pieces consider disease and the body from a more grounded—but no less harrowing—perspective.

The nonfictional title piece perfectly synthesizes Blumlein's preoccupations and directly addresses the collection's central concerns. Beginning with an account of a trek through the Sierra Nevada mountains, the piece then turns to a consideration of Henry David Thoreau's death from tuberculosis. This leads directly to the revelation that Blumlein has been undergoing treatment for lung cancer. Blumlein uses excerpts from his journal to explore a full range of self-reflection, emotionality, hard science, and curiosity as he moves from understanding cancer as "a dark fat evil eye, sinister and malignant" to "a window into who we are, a deep deep window into the...bacchanal of life." What follows is a stunning meditation on disease and the inexorable approach of death.

Blumlein compassionately argues for a view of disease and death being as much a part of human life as empathy, anxiety, or love. Written in 1997, "Paul and Me" is a tall tale for the late-20th century, a juxtaposition of legend and reality that gets at the heart of human frailty with remarkable tenderness. Late in the story, the aging narrator encounters Paul Bunyan—a friend and former lover—wasting away after twenty years of sickness and grief. "You planning on dying?" the narrator asks. The giant man responds, "I dream of it sometimes. Is dreaming planning? You tell me." Under Blumlein's microscope, not even demigods are afforded immunity. But disease and death are never evils to be defeated; rather, they're an integral part of who we are. As the scientist in "Know How, Can Do" explains to her sentient test subject, "Being gone is part of being here, it's part of being human."

Beyond the compelling biological facets of the collection, Blumlein clearly delights in language, contaminating sterile medical jargon with visceral lyricism and clever linguistic devices. Adam, the roundworm narrator of "Know How, Can Do," tracks his own mental development with the language of his narration—from syntactically simple to complex to joyously florid. Ten pages into the story, Adam celebrates, "I have my ease (I got them yesterday)...I have my ewes, too. You, I mean. My u's," subtly revealing that the whole first third of the story was written without two critical vowels. By learning language, Adam learns what it means to be human: "Living without language," he says, "is a hopeless sort of living, which is to say unburdened." Language, then—along with mortality—is a burden worth shouldering.

Despite his tendency for minute observation, Thoreau rarely turned his microscope on himself, even in the late stages of his tuberculosis. While this dismays and fascinates Blumlein, he notes that "self exposure, particularly of the most intimate, gruesome, physical details of one's own body and health, as riveting and irresistible as it may sound, is not everyone's cup of tea." Fortunately, Blumlein respects Thoreau's restraint and discretion while fully embracing his own gruesome physicality. For a collection so heavily concerned with disease and death, *Thoreau's Microscope* rarely feels melancholic; Blumlein's acceptance of mortality allows him to hopefully and exuberantly dig into the blood and guts of humanity.

—Mark Wadley

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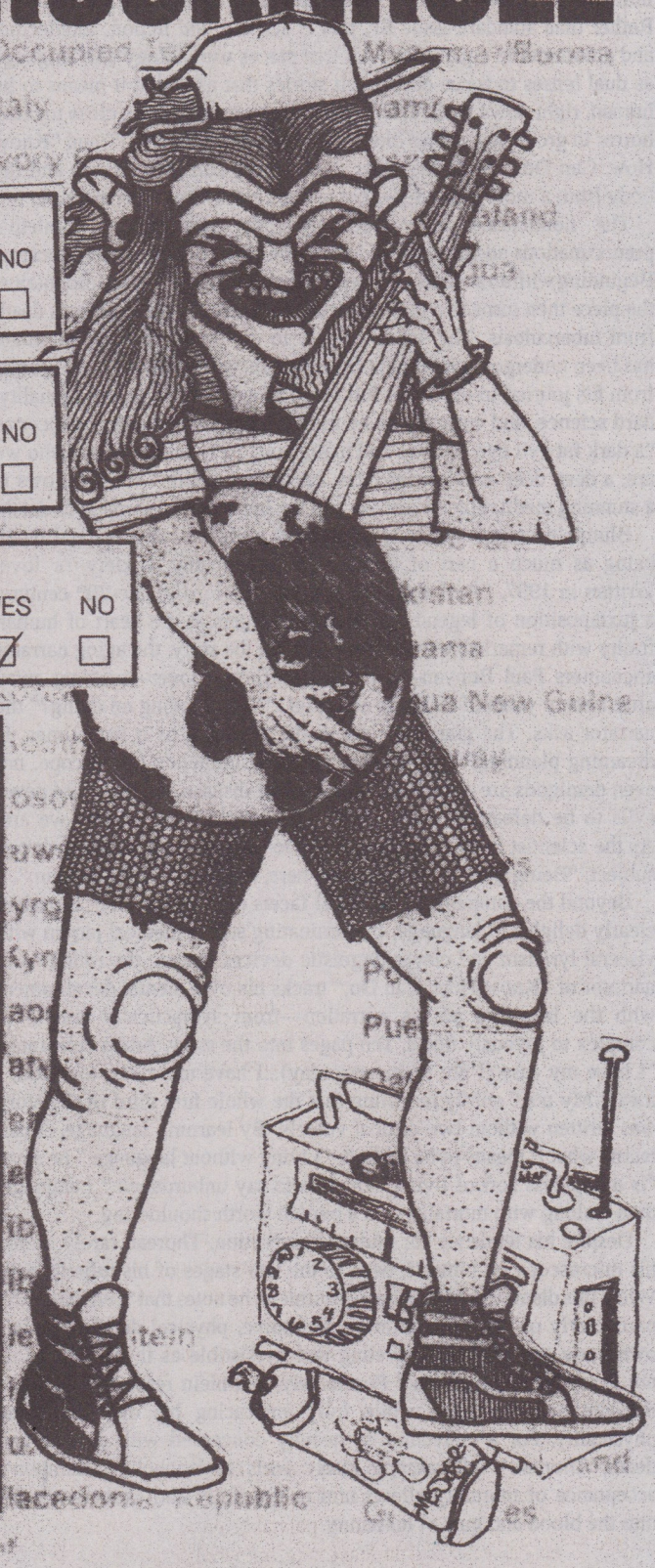

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(WN) Robert Collins

ALIANS – "Cała Anarchia Mieści Się w Uliczniku" LP

Aggressive, rumbling Polish punk with a serious ska bent... and an accordion. Not just an accordion, but an accordion that makes a really good record even better. More than once I'm reminded of post-*Legenda* ARMIA, and I might even suggest that ALIANS are even more advanced (and / or "out there") in their song construction. Even the ska / reggae tunes are hard hitting, and the relatively mellow "Koleda" is one of my favorite moments on the record (even though out of the context of the record I don't know that I would feel the same way). Released in 1996, this is the third LP from ALIANS, and serves as a testimony to the importance of labels like Pasażer distributing these classics to the masses (see several other releases and reissues in these review pages) as much as it stands on its own as a classic record. (WN)
(Pasażer)

ALIANS – "Mega Yoga" LP

Another Polish punk band that I totally overlooked, probably due to their releases being mostly on cassette and CD. They were mostly active in the '90s throughout the early '00s, and this is the first time their debut album sees vinyl, and it's great! Sound-wise it's pretty dated, but I'm finding a lot to enjoy here as a huge '80s / '90s Euro punk fan. It's thrashed-out punk with just enough melody to recall bands like POST REGIMENT and some reggae moments. Looking forward to tracking down my own copy! A must for fans of old Polish punk and hardcore. (MA)
(Pasażer)

AWEFUL KANAWFUL – "Clam's Cassino" LP

Well well, this is some completely scatterbrained jazzbo bullshit. Not punk at all...It's largely virtuoso nonsense, very indebted to GRATEFUL DEAD and possibly the MAGIC BAND: jammy, overloaded, in its own orbit. They most certainly had a ball makin' this record, but listening to it sure fuckin' sucks. (MC)
(Chocolate Chin)

BAD SHADOWS – "Voices In The Dark" LP

Voices In The Dark seems to meander across an array of pop-centered sounds only to arrive at something palatable enough for your aging auntie. Vaguely spooky and dark at times, but wholly recognizable (and basic) rock'n'roll, but with some scant poppy, punk moments smeared around for good measure. Ho-hum, la-ti-da, zzzzzzzzz... (MC)
(Hovercraft / Resurrection)

BETA BOYS – "Late Nite Acts" LP

Speedy flanger punk from the same Seattle / Olympia crew / scene that brought you the likes of LYSOL, STIFF LOVE, etc. This LP mostly sounds like gothic BLACK FLAG, but occasionally BETA BOYS flip the script and it's hardcore BAUHAUS. Lyrics are to be expected, shallow graves and trips to hell, shit like that. Timeless. I have a lot of respect for this scene, because the bands all sound of a piece (more or less raucous garage punk), but nonetheless still manage to make a concerted effort to try new things / genres. Choke on the bile from this cauldron, children, it's a new and welcome twist. Top shelf. (MR)
(Feel It)

BEYOND PEACE – "What's There To Be So Proud Of?" EP

It's not easy to keep a fast hardcore song going for three minutes and not have it sound boring, but BEYOND PEACE achieved that on the title track of this four-song EP. It's explicitly denouncing white pride, which is so important right now. Bands like GLUE and WARTHOG come to mind when listening to this—it has that raw, riffy hardcore sound with belting vocals and gritty production. (AJ)
(Slugsalt)

BIAŁA GORĄCZKA – "Spokoj" 2xLP

Eclectic Polish punk with elements of folk and prog mixed in to their punky stew of a sound. A re-release of their (per the label's description) "break on through stuff" from 2003, it's a challenge to find two back-to-back songs on this record that cover the same sonic ground. The bass is the biggest through line, usually leading the songs with some remarkably well-written and technical riffs. Multiple vocalists appear throughout, sometimes together, sometimes unaccompanied through a given track. Plentiful samples drop in to offer another disorienting layer to the proceedings. The label offers up BERURIER NOIR as an influence, and that does make sense. There's also a strong similarity to work of Basque punk songwriter FERMIN MUGURAZA and the more out-there UK anarcho and anarcho-affiliated bands like the APOSTLES and DOCTOR AND THE CRIPPENS, though BIAŁA GORĄCZKA draw more from the eclecticism than the playfulness of either of those bands. The most straightforward pieces (viz. "Bruone

Cialo Moje") offer up some really great snarling punk, but there is always a twist right around the corner, whether that be a sample of a crying baby or a metal riff or a lengthy unaccompanied group chant. This isn't always an easy listen, but it is often a rewarding one. Polish punk enthusiasts will be familiar with that feeling, of course. Like most 2xLP records, this could be improved with some judicious editing, but as it stands, it's a solid release, especially for fans of Eastern European punk. (AU)
(Pasażer)

BITTER AND ABUSIVE LANGUAGE – "苦くて虐待的な言葉" CD

Churning guttural stench punk - like grindcore played at 33 rpm and / or fist banging D-beat with death metal vocals. It just sounds filthy and mean, which is definitely a positive. (WN)
(self-released)

THE BLANKZ – "(I Just Want To) Slam / Baby's Turning Blue"

Sneers? Shades? Leopard print? Check, check, and check. Really saccharine '77 shite here, glossy gobs from some desert yobs. Basic and safe soundin' stuff across both sides: trite odes to pit domination and overdosing, teetering too damn close to embarrassment. Smartly packaged...so as to obscure the crapola contained within? That's my guess... (MC)
(Slope)

THE BLUE LEECHING AMBULANCE SONGS – "Vanished Noise" CD

You know, I'm admittedly pretty closed-minded when it comes to emo sounding shit. I can think of maybe three to four albums that I feel hold up from that genre of long ago, and when I hear modern emo shit, I can immediately tune the fuck out. This band, from Japan, although not able to immediately win me over, are certainly doing it right. Super energetic, and super precise and intricate without being highbrow. Although it's not nearly as anthemic as the earlier AT THE DRIVE-IN releases, it seems like they would include that shit as inspiration, and try to sweat out that same energy. At times trippy as hell, and pretty punk every now and then. (DZ)
(Fine Tuning)

BLUES LAWYER – "Guess Work" LP

These Bay Area heavy hitters (members of the WORLD, MALL WALK, PREENING etc) serve up ten tasty morsels deserving of a Michelin star, if they awarded them for perfectly concise pop. Betraying antipodean influences from the Flying Nun roster but also reminiscent of '90s Olympia K Records international pop underground sounds. Augmenting the stripped-down songcraft is some really dynamic lead guitar playing from Nic Russo of DICK STUSSO. No prizes for guessing what I think of this—it's great! (AM)
(Emotional Response)

BRANDY – "Laugh Track" 12"

Fun noisy punk outta New York here. Members' past performance in PAMPERS and RUNNING ought to give you a fair idea of what BRANDY sounds like; an outside point of comparison might be LAMPS (the long-running L.A. band, not the OKC popsters of more recent vintage). It's good! As good as a brandy old fashioned sweet? No, but few things in life are, so I don't hold that against them. (MF)
(Monofonus Press)

BSÍ – "Ekki á Ledid" EP

Spacey minimal dancey dubbed out post-punk from Iceland that will appeal to fans of PYLON and ESG. It's very pop, more so than those two referenced bands for sure; the singer has a voice that kind of reminds me of Katie's from PRIESTS where it's almost like she could be a "real singer." Sounds like a band that could have played with ERASE ERRATA or the BUSH TETRAS. Cool radical political punk for those that *Wanna Buy a Bridge* etc. (LG)
(Why Not?)

BUM OUT – "Celebrate with Me, I'm Letting Myself Go" 12"

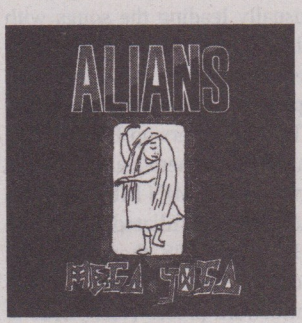
BUM OUT play pop punk in the JAWBREAKER / '90s No Idea Records vein. The mid- to uptempo songs are aggressive but a little bouncy and melodic with just a hint of Revolution Summer style emo. Vocals are sung, a little gruff, a little snotty. Guitars are fuzzy with occasional single note parts that aren't quite leads. Songs are pretty well written, but there isn't necessarily anything that stands out on the record. (PA)
(1407 / Twistworthy)

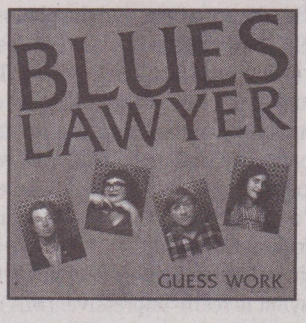
CEMENT SHOES – "A Peace Product of the USA" EP

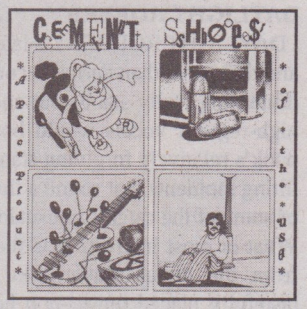
Mean-spirited rockin' punk that veers towards hardcore, but only in the way that some of the lesser tracks on a *Killed By Death* comp might. CEMENT SHOES released a demo a while back, which was more straight-ahead mean guy hardcore, kinda like BILL BONDSMEN. This is an improvement. Notice I've already said "mean" twice. The whole 7" seems to be about hating hippies, which is as on the nose now as it was as in 1977, I suppose (Burning Man, ahem, keeps that fire alive). Maybe this helps: remember when MUDHONEY was a piss-soaked band? This record certainly does! Only it's 2018 now, and, thus, the songs here aren't as slow or overly riffy (unless you play the record at 33 ⅓, which you shouldn't). CEMENT SHOES nonetheless stretch the tracks out real long, which probably makes sense if you're only putting two songs on your EP, unless, of course, you're the DWARVES, which, perhaps not coincidentally, isn't an inapt comparison for this record slash band. (MR)
(Feel It)

CHILLER – "Manipulated Skin" EP

I'm playing this loud and I'm excited by this pulverizing hardcore attack. Drums are in a frenzy, with stop-and-go moments of sizzling riffs and satisfying changes. Listening makes me feel simultaneously optimistic and vulgarly pissed off. This debut EP is both mercilessly stomping and sonically uplifting. The snare rolls are crispy and the vocals are snarling and powerful. This EP takes off immediately and is relentless until the needle lifts. Pittsburg is bringing the fire, and I need







to check out CHILLER live. This is even more amped up than their 2016 demo (which I felt deserved a vinyl release). A heavy hitter with several punishing hooks versus predictable body slams. Recommended! (JR)
(self-released)

CLAYFACE – "8-Song EP" EP

Rhythmic hardcore from Germany with guttural vocals that remind me of CHARGE, HUMAN WASTE, and RECTIFY. Quite easy on the ears and poetic in delivery, with vocals shouted slightly independently off the timing of the songs. I like that. Everything sounds basically like traditionally hardcore, but then I notice everything spills over itself a bit longer than necessary. As if CLAYFACE are splitting at the seams. Drum fills carry into the next measure, guitars fill out and swell. Backing vocals add to the intensity. The catchiness of the breakdowns contrasted by the grizzly vocals in German has me compelled and engaged. Lyrics are concerned with environmental issues, rich class privilege, and the right wing scum of Europe. Hear hear, CLAYFACE. Your message and sound carries darkness and weight and I am listening in agreement. A very satisfying listen. (JR)
(Golem)

COHERENCE – "Of Alternate Spaces" 12"

A pretty short record of emotional hardcore from the Ebullition school. The songs are heavy, mostly mid-tempo, trudging numbers that are broken up by bursts of melody, aggressive hardcore, and occasional twinkly guitars. Dual vocalists stick to a mostly screamed / talked feel. Personal / political lyrics are accented by two spoken word tracks that deal with personal reflections on immigration. (PA)
(A-F / Get Better)

COLLATE – "Liminal Concerns" 12"

At last, a vinyl release for these Portland DIY stalwarts. Disclosure: I will temporarily set aside all shitworker / contributor rivalry and attempt to write a fair review: masthead detectives may note that this band features *MRR* columnist Erika Elizabeth of "Futures and Pasts" fame. Regular readers of that column will know that Erika is a tenured professor of post-punk history at Oregon University of Post-Punk Studies, Portland, and this album reflects a practical application of all that knowledge gained from decades of undergraduate studies and a thesis on *Messthetics*. Shards of glass guitar punctuate a rhythm section that wants you to dance that anxious bedroom dance you did when you first played that AU PAIRS mixtape your cousin made. Each song is delivered with minimal fanfare and maximum intent: music by people who know what they're doing and know what they want. Me, I just want more. (AM)
(self-released)

THE COLTRANES – "White Hag" LP

I appreciate this record for two reasons: 1) The band's from Temecula, and have been around for a minute, satisfying Inland Empire punks 2) There's something about it—maybe the stacked, groovy riffs—that remind me of early CEREMONY. The vocals are...unique. The singer sounds really growly and frantic. I can't help but picture Gollum from *Lord of the Rings* behind the mic. I'm not really into the vocals, but I bet it makes for a wild live show. (AJ)
(SPHC)

CONDUIT – "Drowning World" LP

This is noisy, disjointed, sludgy hardcore. A bit of a controlled mess. It's like noise rock but way heavier. Like black metal but way slower and without the guitar shredding. Like the URANUS 2x7" but less emotional and once again, way slower. Not bad at all. (PA)
(Kitschy Spirit)

CONSTANT FEAR / FRENETIX – split CD

One long-running Scottish outfit (CONSTANT FEAR) sharing a disc with some relative newcomers. The vets add a metallic guitar crunch to some excellent sounding UK punk—four midpaced stompers on their half. FRENETIX are a looser animal—gruff, ramshackle political pogo mixed with churning metalpunk dirges à la AXEGRINDER. (WN)
(Let The Bastards Grind / Shatterpunk)

COUPE GORGE – "Troubles" LP

This record is hard as hell, and should be considered a landmark of the current wave of French Oi! led by bands like SYNDROME 81 and RIXE. The band definitely isn't reinventing the wheel, but every song on the record is a banger. The riffs pack a grittiness and grooviness that just make you want to shave your head and break a window. I heard a few NEGATIVE APPROACH-type riffs in there that really excited me. And the singer sounds so pissed; it's dope. (AJ)
(Offside)

THE CRIPPENS – "The Minnow and the Pike" 12"

The Doctor might have split town, but here are the CRIPPENS, still carrying on and still quite...CRIPPENS-ish. Of course there's going to be a dub or funk or metal parody break in every song, but for the most part this is UKHC in the style we (*MRR*) called "thrash" in the '80s. Lyrical content includes paeans to the secret life of weeds, the alleged cryogenic freezing of Walt Disney, and drinking under bridges. It's not a top-shelf example of the style by any means, but it's surprisingly catchy and un-dated and the last track is a genuine melodic hardcore ripper! Minus points for the very bland graphic design and font choices, though. C'mon, you all lived through the '80s, you should know that computers are not your friends! (AU)
(Boss Tuneage)

CYCOSIS – "Death To My Soul, Live The Cyco Dream" CD

DRI? Meet Japanese hardcore. Now, might I suggest that you go to a NYHC show together in 1989 and then go start a supergroup. This thing is a goddamned monster—riffs for days and dominant backing vocals, all with the power *and* the nuance to make every track memorable. Killer. (WN)
(Hardcore Kitchen)

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY – "Lost Permanence" EP

DAYLIGHT ROBBERY's latest release comes off as a little more raw and darkwave than earlier records. Heavy hitting, creatively composed drumming really stands out and adds a little flashiness, and the slick, high-register vocals would hold their weight outside the bounds of punk's relatively forgiving standards for vocalists. There are dramatic, lilting moments that sound a little like X, and moments that remind me of some of the catchy, unusual vocal melodies from the OBSERVERS. What is most interesting is the unexpected elements, mostly coming from the guitar player, like occasional whammy bar bends and tastefully placed power-pop hot licks. While the vocal melodies are super interesting, the songs don't have a ton of dynamic driving them. There's a few super catchy vocal melodies and solos I want to grab onto, but I found myself waiting for it to happen again. (HB)
(Taken By Surprise)

DEATHGRAVE / VIOLATION WOUND – split EP

Here's what happens when a bunch of Bay Area underground metal veterans make a record. DEATHGRAVE brings us some horrifically crude death metal, with a splattering of explosive diarrhea. Featuring the front man from BRAINOIL on guitar, this shit will have you dry heaving all the way to the graveyard. VIOLATION WOUND features a dude from the legendary death metal outfit AUTOPSY. This band, however, keeps it punk, delivering some extra pissed off, crust tinged hardcore in league with TOXIC NARCOTIC. This record comes with issue #30 of *Short Fast & Loud*, the zine of all that is raw and extreme. Not for the faint of heart! (BA)
(Six Weeks)

DEZERTER – "Kolaboracja II" LP

I sat down all ready to bang this one out since this, DEZERTER's second album from 1988, is the first of theirs I ever obtained and spent shitloads of time listening to. I wrongly assumed it was a simple reissue with just maybe a remaster and some retrospective liner notes (both of which are indeed present), but there are *guitars added* to much of this, giving it more of a modernized overall sound. At first listen I was completely dismissive, like "this is not what it's supposed to sound like!" Some parts sound better to me than others. The truth is that this band is incredible and has endured longer than most others (I think since 1980?), have always evolved musically and remained relevant, and I can understand why they would want to reissue this LP in this way. This was the album where they veered away from basic hardcore punk and added acoustic guitars, some flute, and other cool elements and influences and the result is incredible and still super punk. I've gushed about the importance of this band in these pages, so I'm not gonna be redundant here. If you already have the original LP, you may wanna check this out for the liner notes and translated lyrics, but otherwise all punks should grab either version, as the original is fairly common at a low price. (MA)
(Pasażer)

DZIECI KAPITANA KLOSSA – "Syf Bałtycki" LP

First of all, I have to tell you that the massive booklet accompanying this is all in Polish, so I can't read a lick. It appears to be an interview with the members, and the photos are sick. This recording is live from 1985 at the legendary Jarocin festival in Poland, but might as well be a studio recording quality-wise. The info sheet says they were a Polish punk band sarcastically themed around a then popular series about a Polish spy in the German army in WWII. I'd say the music represents that pretty well melodically, as well as retaining the classic Polish punk sound: expressive, melodic, forceful, and not without some ska songs. I'd never heard about this band and always enjoy being turned onto old Eastern Euro stuff, but I feel like I'm missing out contextually with my ignorance of the Polish language! Musically there's a lot I dig, and the layout is really impressive. (MA)
(Pasażer)

ELECTRO HIPPIES – "Deception Of The Instigator Of Tomorrow: Collected Works 1985–1987" CD

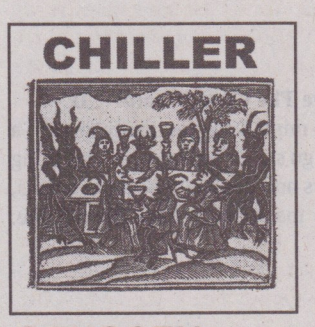
Oh hell yes, says the guy who turns up his nose at pointless reissues. But you see, this one isn't pointless—it's essential. Stellar and oft heralded late '80s UK fastcore / thrash pioneers, ELECTRO HIPPIES make blasting and grinding sound undeniably *punk*, and the classic hardcore influence is present. They just play so much fuckin' faster than any of their contemporaries (save maybe HERESY and LÄRM). Listening to these Peel Sessions was an absolute shot in the arm. The remaining 51(!!) tracks culled from the GENERIC split LP and demo / live recordings are an awesome archive—even if you don't feel the need to be a completist. Fans of intelligent punk should already know ELECTRO HIPPIES, as should fans of seminal face melting thrashcore. So unless you have it all already, then consider this mandatory. (WN)
(Boss Tuneage)

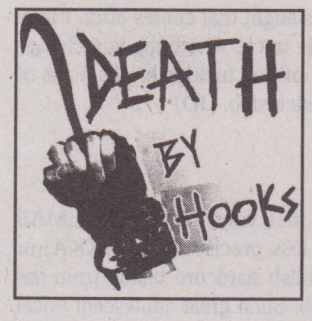
FALSE RITUAL – "Enslaved" EP

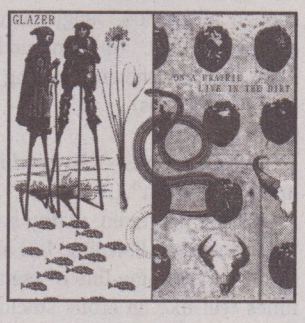
I am old, and I have a hard time keeping up with every band that does something, *but* I will concede I recognize a genuinely unique hardcore punk recording when I hear it, and the new EP from FALSE RITUAL of PDX is no exception. Bouncy basslines from EXTREME NOISE TERROR *Retrobution*-era production. Echoing, slightly VOIVOD in effect, vocals, harken also to CRUCIFIX and early CORROSION OF CONFORMITY. Fast and furious, but there is something weirdly hypnotically, melodic and eulogizing, about the title track that opens up into the final song, a bestial war ensemble about the endless paranoia of today's world...Upon further inspection I realize this is from the mad punker minds of members BELLICOSE MINDS, TOTAL WAR, HELLSHOCK, BOG PEOPLE...Awesome stipple drawing on the cover. There are only 300, act on it. (JR)
(Doomsday)

THE FREAKS OF NATURE – "Want Me! / Now You Say We're Through"

Can't quite sign off on these FREAKS' self-described "wild!" sound, as this is just really by-the-numbers '60s punk rehash. "Want Me!" offers fuzzy commandments toward groin thunder, but I remain chaste despite their pleas. The flip is a familiar *Back From The Grave* chestnut, and it fares only slightly better. Listen to the FLAKES instead. (MC)
(Related)







RECORDS

GLAZER – "On A Prairie, Live In The Dirt" LP

I can see you getting into this, I guess. Especially if you miss the heavy hitters of indie rock. There's never not a solo ripping through this cheap beer version of someone who just discovered SUPERCHUNK. Don't get me wrong, though, as this shit is pretty fucking versatile and dips its toes into darker, heavier stuff at times. It just sounds like a lot of the more rad college bands from the '90s. (DZ)
(State Champion)

GARS – "Gone Away, Return To Sender" LP

GONE AWAY, RETURN TO SENDER, or simply GARS, is an emotive hardcore band from Gdańsk, Poland. Tons of melodic discordant chords, with proggy breaks that beckon to AMANDA WOODWARD or ENVY. I love drawn out, emotive hardcore like this. Songs that build into cathartic releases, that are heavy, pensive, melodic, aggressive, and technical. GARS embodies all of that but fall short on their delivery. Every song on this release really feels to blend together with no real distinct transitions or direction, and I truly wanted more from this release. I would love to hear how this band grows, and would be curious to hear their next record. The main vocalists sits atop the instrumentation in a way that make me question their compatibility. Maybe it translates better live? (RS)
(Pasażer)

GROSS POLLUTER – "Cynical Scumbaggery / Piss Popular"

Out-of-style VIBRATORS-esque punk replete with a fake British accent filtered through a very heavy Epitaph Records lens, thinkin' BAD RELIGION or the OFFSPRING. (Okay, to be fair, I do not know for sure that the British accent is fake, but, even if it is real, it *sounds* like it's fake, and this is an American band [I'm pretty sure], so I'm making an educated accent guess here.) The B-side is better, as it has slow, crunchy build and the guitar solo isn't dumb. I will give this record its due, it's very catchy and it's not pop. That's a lot harder to do than the DEAD BOYS make it seem. (MR)
(Rat Town)

HAIRBONE – "Earth to Momma" LP

Formerly known as HARIBO, HAIRBONE has been an NYC artist collective / performance group for ten years and this is their first LP. Most of the cuts on here are more *explorations* than songs, and I feel like the audio falls a little flat without the band's touted visual aspects. With a few exceptions (like the fully realized arc of the poppy "Wine Product"), most off the record plays as moments that have been layered and layered with NYC art damage. They're reaching for BUTTHOLE SURFERS and JAD FAIR, but not quite making it. (GH)
(Blank Forms)

HEADLESS DEATH – "A Hideous Warning" CD

Breathtaking. As in "I had a hard time breathing while I listened to this." Absolutely ferocious grindcore of the highest order. They sound like punks, but punks that just wanna grind, you know? Weird to drop a JERRY'S KIDS track famously covered by HIS HERO IS GONE (though the HEADLESS DEATH version is sicker, honestly), but that's the only thing that makes me raise an eyebrow. Everything else makes me want to fucking destroy everything. Dizzyingly fast, terrifyingly heavy, and utterly non-stop grind action. Choice track: "Horrible Stench Of Tomb." (WN)
(Regurgitated Semen)

HIRS COLLECTIVE / JENNA & THE PUPS – split 12"

I'll briefly talk about the music here before I dive into the *real* criticism of this record. JENNA & THE PUPS writes pop songs that seems to pull from WEEZER and '90s indie rock mainstays. The songs are well written, and would likely win over fans of BUGG or any number of indie rock revival acts from the last several years. HIRS COLLECTIVE, on the other hand, seem to stick with their tried-and-true formula of extremely harsh grindcore. I say seem to because I cannot be 100% accurate about what the music here sounds like—their side of the record is 78 rpm. Since my turntable does not have a 78 rpm feature, I *spun the fucking record with my finger*. So I feel confident that my interpretation of what the right speed may not always be accurate, but it's accurate enough to tell what's up with their side of the record.

What does it mean when a musician with an important message makes an LP that is inaccessible? And yes, this is inaccessible on a number of levels. Not only do most turntables no longer include a 78 rpm function, but the JENNA & THE PUPS side rotates from the inside out and, if my turntable is functioning correctly, there seems to be a locked groove most of the way into the record. I wouldn't have known if their side were over had I not tried moving the needle to see if more songs were there. Furthermore, the record is not available to listen to on any streaming media, nor are the lyrics anywhere. I find the exclusion of lyrics to be the gravest offense here—Jenna Pup (who essentially is the main creative force for both bands) has made a name for herself through her blunt lyrics that give voice to the harsh reality of trans existence. Her fans (myself included here—I cried the first time I heard "Trans Woman Dies of Old Age") look up to her as a powerful trans activist, and excluding lyrics in this record is alienating to people who are already so strongly alienated by the punk scene (not to mention society as a whole). I understand that this record is a jokey tour record, but I hope that Jenna and others involved in this release reconsider their decision to not publish the lyrics for this record anywhere. (JD)
(self-released)

HOGG – "Self-Extinguishing Emission" LP

Chicago's HOGG offers up a full length's worth of dark, pulsing, droning, noisy industrial and post-punk. Vocals are sometimes pretty and buried, but often amplify up into KRIEG-like howls. Most of the songs feature sparse instrumentation and cold beats, but the band's confidence keeps it all from becoming background chatter. I wouldn't really compare this band to HIDE, but I bet they would complement each other well in a live setting, if you get my drift. (GH)
(Scrapes)

HONEY BUCKET – "Furniture Days" LP

Talk about ticking all the McNaughton boxes. This Portland post-punk power trio trades in terse, taut tuneage, stripped to the sinews. OK,

enough alliteration. Jangle-angular guitars, repetitive, propulsive bass, and hyperkinetic drumming underscore deadpan vocals delivered with a FALL-like detachment. Nothing extraneous, nothing left to chance. (AM)
(See My Friends)

INTERCOURSE – "Everything Is Pornography When You've Got an Imagination" LP

Weirdo, perverted, mathy hardcore from New Haven, Connecticut. This is not easy listening. It is abrasive musically, vocally, and lyrically. Lyrics straddle the line of metaphor, sci-fi, and perverted rants that at times feel like an erotic suicide note. It's like we are hearing stream of consciousness from the singer's deepest darkest nightmares and experiences. There is a lot to digest with this record. If you read beyond the surface level of the lyrics, you will get insight into how an Arab-American navigates and pushes back against white supremacy. It may be steeped in gnarly metaphor and blastbeats, but it's there. Anyways, this is COALESCE and DEADGUY worship, and I have absolutely no qualms with that. Also for fans of GROUNDWORK, DANGERS, BOTCH, and DAUGHTERS. (RS)
(Constant Disappointment / Eye Tape)

JETBOYS – "I Don't Want To / Get The Kids Jumpin'"

I guess nothing is off limits when it comes to KBD-era punk reissues! Columbus, Ohio's JETBOYS released one of the more, uh, accessible singles on New Age alongside Columbus's early '80s art punk scene including SCREAMING URGE, VERTICAL SLIT, and GREAT PLAINS. Where those ones tend to meander a bit, this one's pure pop punk...well, the standout B-side is, anyway, and original copies have retailed for approximately $100 since the internet started. Whatever quantity was around then seems to have dried up now, so thankfully Rerun's here with a high quality reissue with high gloss fold-out photo-tour band history for those in need. Of course, us superfans also own the *Columbus Hometown Album* LP, one of the few true punk tracks on a radio station comp!! (GB)
(Rerun)

KARBÖNITE – "Infection" EP

KARBÖNITE play loose, raw, muffled D-beat. They're not the fastest band in the world, but the vocals remind me of DIRT and SACRILEGE, the drums of CALLOUSED, and over all this is not full of surprises but charges through with discomfort and ENERGETIC CRUSHER force. I have their flexi, which I thought was much faster, but *Infection* does not give out on fire and just blow steam. This release is absolutely a Dis-heartful EP with dense emotion and warmth in a sea of cold blown out noise bands of the ilk. (JR)
(Aborted Society)

KHIIS – "Saboor" EP

Holy shit, this crushes. I've seen KHIIS play plenty of times before (I'm sure most Bay Area punks have), but I've never been able to so crisply and cleanly hear their sound. It's a brave move for any hardcore band to begin their record with a stomper, but "Sahar" totally fucking annihilates and sets the stage for the onslaught that comes after. I love this whole record, but especially the title track, where the key change between the verse and chorus hits like a million fucking bricks. Fans of modern hardcore punk should love this sick slab. (JD)
(Distort Reality)

KOLMAS PÄIVÄ – "Demot '85" LP

A ripping '85 demo dug up for its first vinyl release. KOLMAS PÄIVÄ (Third Day) reminds me of a less precise MELLAKKA, or really any number of other classic Finnish hardcore bands from the '80s. They're more punk and less thrash. Such great adolescent vocal shredding, my throat hurts just from listening. After digging a little deeper online, I discovered a few of these tracks were included on the boot of the ABORTTI 13 / PYHÄKOULU split EP, for reasons I'm unable to uncover. There's literally no English text on this release, but the layout is nice and the color photos of the fashionable teenagers are super cute. I'd rate this above average among lesser known old things getting reissued. A definite score for fans of the stuff. (MA)
(Passing Bells / Plastic Passion)

LETHAL DOSE – "Demo" EP

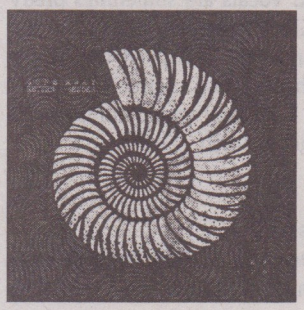
Fun, straightforward streetpunk in the sense that you'd be pogoing and skank-stancing rather than pushing and shoving in this circle pit. Most good streetpunk has an underlying rock'n'roll vibe, and LETHAL DOSE is no exception to that rule. Catchy bass lines remind me of ANTI-FLAG's mix of rage, enthusiasm, and that weird kind of deranged elation that comes with being enthusiastically enraged in a big group of like-minded freaks—but this time without the super annoying vocals. To the contrary, the singer's gruff, growly style delivered with a bouncy cadence reminds me of Steve Ignorant's singing on CRASS's *Feeding of the 5000*. Lyrics about killing KKK members and hating rich people honor Texas punk's tradition of unadulterated shit-talking. This is a vinyl pressing of the band's demo, and I am really looking forward to hearing what they come up with next! (HB)
(Offside)

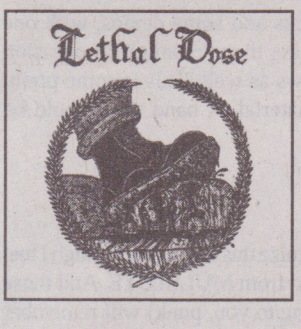
LILAC – "Barbed Wire Entanglement / On A Wheel" EP

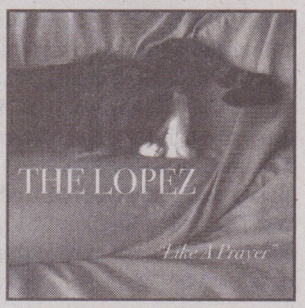
Repetitive, straightforward, monotonous, driving, ugly, yet melodic punk. Paradoxical punk. The kind of punk that leaves your skin crawling away from your bare bones, yet you still have the chills, because your body actually can't remember if it was hot or cold, so you just sit there stunned. The last time I got that feeling from a band was the first time I heard TURBOSLUT, and I have been waiting to feel that feeling again for a while now. While TURBOSLUT had a more punk edge, LILAC definitely has more of an emo feel. The roundabout sway that they emit from their music reminds me so much of UNWOUND or LOWERCASE, with a harder edge like KARP, and it rocks. (RS)
(25 Diamonds)

LIME CRUSH – "Sub Divide" LP

I was obsessed with this group's first EP, an incredible collision of wild KLEENEX-isms that was quite intoxicating. (Check out the song







RECORDS

"Graveyard" from that record—so killer!) Sort of lost track of them after that moment, so was excited to see this LP. The songs from the EP are on this too, I think re-recorded versions maybe? LIME CRUSH play minimal experimental punk with cool gang female vocals that are what give them the KLEENEX feeling; the music is more contained than those Swiss punks though, they really sound like a punker early '90s K Records band. A collision between two different styles of exuberant sound I guess? I could imagine them playing with the PASTELS! Or SWELL MAPS! Definitely worth checking out if you are into wild international DIY underground explorations. (LG)
(Fettkakao)

THE LOPEZ – "Like A Prayer / Throwin' Shade"

You know how some music makes you see colors? Well, these two tracks of '80s-sounding, poppy dance rock fill my sound eyes with glittery neons. The fuzzy guitars and dance-beat drums make a fluffy bed for the vocalist's excited shouting. If you want something light and fun, this Pittsburgh duo has something for you. (RH)
(self-released)

LORDS OF CHERNOBYL / TRASH CAN DANCE – split EP

Both sides are so bad that I honestly can't tell if these two Finnish bands are kidding or not. LOC plays tough guy biker rock. Cookie Monster squealing over barre chord braindead testosterone, and not the good kind. The lyrical content seemed likely created by a drunk eight year old...also not the good kind. TCD are much less macho, with '80s-style keys and bad makeup, playing a song about spider pajamas and an adequate cover of "I Walked With A Zombie." Kudos for that and for accidentally ripping off the TWISTED SISTER logo. This was a really hard listen. (DZ)
(self-released)

L.O.T.I.O.N. / SCUMPUTER – "Campaign For Digital Destruction" split LP

Wow! The return of London's original digi-punk deviants SCUMPUTER is definitely a moment to celebrate! Complete with classic dot matrix punx graphics, SCUMPUTER's contribution is a scrumpy-swilling android's nightmare of chopped-up dance music, violent glitches, synthesizer farts and suspiciously CHAOS UK-esque hardcore punk. Fans of the Tokyo Sound System scene (of which there should be many more than there are!) will eat this up and ask for seconds! The idiotic "My Adidas," featuring an unwilling guest vocal from RUN-DMC, is a particular highlight, though their contribution is completely outclassed by a scorching vocal contribution by Jun from WARHEAD on "Invisible Door." New York's L.O.T.I.O.N. go for a more 8-bit graphical approach and a bit more of a "serious" vibe, though not so serious that you can't sense the irony. The heavily processed vocals and live instrumentation invite the inevitable NINE INCH NAILS comparison, but unlike that band, L.O.T.I.O.N. have something interesting to say. On the whole, there's a definite early Wax Trax vibe, as the band teeters on the line between heavy industrial and the more dance-y flavor of the same. The more uptempo material is stronger, though "uptempo" is relative as in general tempos vacillate between "relatively slow" and "dirge." "Active Shooter" is surprisingly catchy given the incredibly bleak lyrical content. This is a great split between two bands that are quite similar on paper but radically different in execution. (AU)
(540)

THE LOWEST – "Doomed" LP

Third LP from this Warsaw band (and my introduction to them). I was really hoping the LOWEST was a DEATH SIDE reference, and sure enough it is not. Gritty ominous hardcore crust with ambient neo-epic production. High-end drums and dissonant guitars. Mystically anti-capitalist, anti-religion themes, and an overwhelming sense of weariness cast forth as a musical example quite the opposite. Blastbeat attacks, chugging metal riffs, brutal militant fills. On the clean side, but demonstrates confident lyricism, talented compositions, and deliberately tough hardcore. Riddled with interesting changes and surprising anthemic harmonies. QUICKSAND meets SKITSYSTEM meets ENTOMBED! Actually, so maybe like the HAUNTED. It definitely grooves while remaining gloom ridden. Flip off the stacks for this in your varsity jacket, headband on the floor to this in your bullet belt—or both. When they go low, you go the LOWEST. (JR)
(Crecer / Pasażer)

LUX VANITAS – "The Secret Life of..." 12"

This is the previously unreleased album and last recording from LUX VANITAS, a mid '90s Minneapolis band that included three members of IMPETUS INTER. While not a complete departure from emo-hardcore, this has a pretty heavy garage rock feel and ends up sounding a whole lot like MONORCHID or CUPID CAR CLUB. It's a little hard to believe that this is just now being released as after a couple listens it becomes apparent that the record totally stands up to most of the stuff that Kill Rock Stars and similar labels were putting out at the time. Well worth picking up, even for those with no nostalgic connection to the band. (PA)
(25 Diamonds)

MAN DESTROYS – "Everything" EP

Hard-charging old school hardcore punk that very much sounds like the sum of its parts. Started as a project with FINAL CONFLICT and DOOMSDAY HOUR, they added vocals from SUICIDAL SUPERMARKET TROLLEYS to complete the package. High energy, clenched fist political punk with a penchant for MOTÖRHEAD...? Sign me up. (WN)
(Not Like You)

MAN VS. MAN – "Hardcore 2018" CD

Ripping Japanese hardcore band covers ripping hardcore classics with great success. ANTIDOTE, NEGATIVE APPROACH, BGK, BAD BRAINS, NEGATIVE GAIN, OFFENDERS...You get the idea, but the supercharged version of BLITZ's "Never Surrender" is worth the price of admission and then some. (WN)
(SuperLame)

MARÉE NOIRE – "Peur Sur La Ville" EP

French hardcore channeling the intense, hasty delivery of WORLD BURNS TO DEATH but perhaps not as dark so more in the range of SEVERED HEAD OF STATE. Raspy vocals and traditional chords carry through breathless lyrics *au* France. Drumheads are loose and vibrating, guitars ring out, as the bass takes its own road, which is always a good thing. This band has a blistering fire, punky yet intimate, and I'm feeling it. Tight first outing. Play it loud, *s'il vous plaît*. They speak the language of hardcore. (JR)
(Destructure / Distro-y / Donnez-Moi Du Feu / Offside)

MARION WALKER – "111egal Sunsh1ne" LP

The title track is the closest thing I have a heard getting to MAGAZINE in a really long time, which is quite a feat. Aside from that moment, the rest of the record is not quite as evocative / cool. It has that "older rockers that wear black and go see reunion bands play" feel, you know, people that dig MBV and JAMC but are kind of more "rocker." I can imagine this band fitting in at Desert Days; they are from Reno but seem really LA. (LG)
(self-released)

MARSZAŁEK / SIKSA – "Patriotyzm Jutra" LP

The SIKSA side is one sixteen-minute track of total experimental sound collage. Samples from various media of people speaking in Polish, short loops of saccharine radio pop, power tools, brutal metal blips, and intermittent moments of original songs seem to represent an appropriately disjointed reaction to a broken and unacceptable reality. The pieces pulled from original recordings sound live, with screaming and talking over minimal guitar or sometimes synth accompaniment. SIKSA's vocalist sometimes mimics the samples she incorporates, repeating short sounds and lines in quick succession, sometimes speaking calmly, and sometimes fiercely screaming. SIKSA breaks every rule and charges forward with what translates as an unstoppable sense of confidence and artistic vision. The label tells us, "Some people love them, others are disgusted," and I believe it. It doesn't sound like punk, but it's probably the punkest thing reviewed in these pages. MARSZAŁEK is a one man band, delivering eight tracks of freaky, fun, spoken-word-heavy art-punk. The vocals are more spoken than sung, and the instruments are limited to excellently dirty, fuzzed out minimalist bass and drums. The lyrics are in Polish, and delivered with a theatrical level of personality and charisma. I'm sure I'm missing a lot, being unable to understand the words. Also must disclaim that there are moments where the singing is definitely rapping. The combination of these bands strangely makes sense, they seem like compatriots in the eternal and valliant quest to stay weird. (HB)
(Melina Crew / Pasażer)

MOVING TARGETS – "The Other Side" CD

This Boston band was around in the mid-'80s and early '90s. Led by Ken Chambers, who previously was in the much underrated BULLET LAVOLTA, this is very similar to the Grant Hart HÜSKER DÜ songs of the *Zen Arcade* / *New Day Rising* / *Flip Your Wig* era. This is a collection of mostly radio sessions tracks and some demos, with one session dating as late as 2007. So I guess they "reunite" on occasion as they are presently playing some shows as well. This is some pretty great stuff, highlighted by the early material. A band that should be much bigger. (RL)
(Boss Tuneage)

MÜLLTÜTE – LP

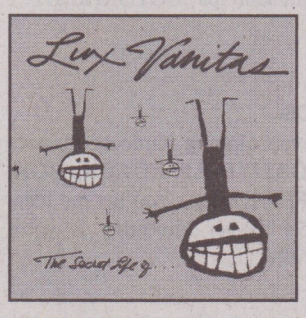
The punks who pay attention will recognize this name even though I feel like it's been a while since we have heard from MÜLLTÜTE. And those punks (and here I hope that I am referring to you, punk) will remember this German band's penchant for fast, hook filled and sometimes quirky approach to hard driving hardcore punk. Like a bunch of kids well versed in all of the subgenres who wanted to make an aggressive garage hardcore band that sounded like early '80s quirky proto-post punk...or something. They took all of the sounds you knew and they robbed from one and borrowed from another and combined things that shouldn't go together until it was totally new and totally familiar at the same time. And now, on this new 12", it's like that...plus it's from funk space. MÜLLTÜTE add synths and effects when and where it counts, they add things to the mix so casually even though you can hear the time that went into crafting not just the songs, but how they are presented ("Tunnel" is a perfect example of how and when to tweak a mix), and the result on this platter is superb. The guitars on "Alle/s." The electronics on "Schimpf Und Schande." The guest ox on "Freundin Von." This thing is packed with "moments" that make you want to pick the needle up and move it back because holy shit what did they just do?!? And all you want to do is hear it again. Top track is "Tunnel," though literally every single song on this record is near perfect, and they clearly have not skipped any of the details. Highest recommendation. (WN)
(self-released)

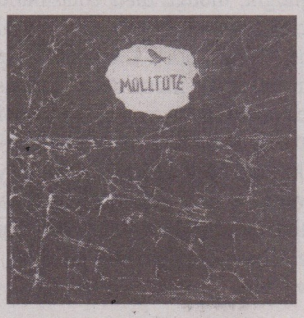
MYSTERY GIRL – "Wild & Mean" EP

I've heard of several MYSTERY GIRLS over the years, but never a singular MYSTERY GIRL. These guys got the fakeout throwback old school look down pat, this single looks like it could have come out circa 1981–82, but apparently they're a current outfit outta Buffalo, NY. Not surprisingly, they've studied up on their forefathers, the HEARTBREAKERS & DEAD BOYS. Funny enough, to me they've got a more Upstate regional flavor à la DOLLS worshipping locals WRECKIN' CREW, MANIKENZ, SECRET SAVIOR, or even the TREND. Great rock'n'roll punk, punk'n'roll, whatever ya wanna call it...all four tracks are great! (GB)
(Feral Kid)

NEIGHBORHOOD BRATS – "Night Shift" EP

Yes! This is more like it! Fairly crisp, competent, breakneck speed rock with killer femme vocals. Super fun, desperate, and on repeat. At times inspired by shit like STOOGES or MC5, but not ripping it in the least. Super glad I got this shit, and hope this is an indicator of a future full length, as it's been a little while for them. (DZ)
(Taken By Surprise)





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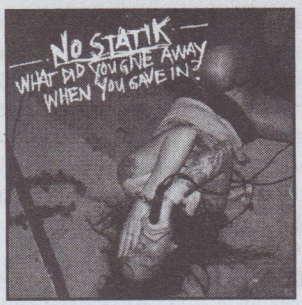

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1984 – "W Hołdzie Fanatykom Marszu" LP

I had to do some research to get up to speed on this band, but it was well worth the time. 1984 is widely recognized as Poland's most legendary coldwave band, playing since 1985 with a variety of lineup changes and sonic incarnations. This release includes two live sets performed in 1985 and 1986 at Poland's Jarocin festival, as well as the band's demo (originally released in 1987). The live sets feature tracks not included in other studio recordings. The sound quality of the live tracks is truly excellent, and the performance is vibrant and raw in a way that undoubtedly was influenced by the energy of the historical moment and the live crowd. The demo tracks sound original and groundbreaking even today, which says a lot for the vision of 1984 and honestly puts current coldwave efforts to shame. The band's sound is alternatingly catchy and haunting, with plenty of space for both tender, minimalist coldwave tangents and disturbing, noisy, emotional outbursts. The LP comes with an LP-sized 24-page booklet full of pictures and lyrics. If you already know and love this band, this release is clearly a gem. To the as of yet uninitiated, this is a classic and highly recommended! (HB)
(Pasażer)

NO STATIK – "What Did You Give Away When You Gave In?" EP

First things first, these guys are Bay Area *legends*. If you know, you know. If you don't, just pick up literally any of their releases, and you'll be stoked. The only disappointing thing about this 7" is that it's not longer. According to the note from the label, this fits together "visually and sonically" with the band's new LP released in August on Iron Lung. So it seems to me like these just didn't fit on the LP or something. Regardless, these songs rip and can totally stand on their own. The first song is pretty thrashy, definitely in the vein of SACRILEGE—which pairs nicely with the singer's driving, desperate vocals. It really feels like they put everything out there when they sing. The second song is more straight-up hardcore, with a hella cool intro that kinda throws you off. I won't give anything away, but it kinda seems like a "You still with me?" moment in their set. They took a big risk and it paid off, which is inspiring and truly shows the band's songwriting talent. The B-side is a "dub" track that's just a repeating bass line with some noisy industrial sounds. Brutal. This is the kind of trailblazing, non-conformist punk the Bay Area is known for. (AJ)
(25 Diamonds)

OBNOX – "Templo Del Sonido" LP

Solo project of Lamont Thomas of THIS MOMENT IN BLACK HISTORY that sounds nothing like THIS MOMENT IN BLACK HISTORY. From a musicianship point of view, this is amazing. To be able to feel versatile and fluid in your art and have people receive it is a hard feat to accomplish. This record is noisy, abrasive, and very textured...A noise / psych record with vocals and funk breaks. It plays out like a much jazzier, softer LIGHTNING BOLT record, which I personally really appreciate because it helped keep me grounded while listening to this record. Complete with interludes that remind me of a stripped down version of what PLEASE INFORM THE CAPTAIN THIS IS A HIJACK did in between tracks on *Defeat Or Humiliate The United States Of America*. The chaos of the song structures can feel anxiety-inducing, which personally takes me away form the actual music and shifts my actual mood to reflect the chaos, but when Lamont breaks into melody, or gives us a break from the harshness, it almost renews my sense of hope...figuratively speaking. I realize that all music is emotional and has the ability to take the listener away to different places emotionally, but the way this record is delivered truly feels psychological. After a few false starts, I ultimately found the right RPMs for the record, but the fact the it's not stated almost makes me think that it is up to the listener's discretion, which I think is really dope, but also, OBNOX...are you performing an experiment on me? Please write me and tell me. Thanks. (RS)
(Astral Spirits / Monofonus Press)

PERMISSION – "Drawing Breath Through A Hole In The Ground" LP

This record makes me scratch my head—it somehow sounds chaotic and balanced at the same time. The first song, "Ambition," really sets the tone for the whole thing with a catchy, moshy stand-alone guitar riff, before the whole band blasts in, and the singer barks *"Fantasy fades / city awakes."* The rest of the album pretty much maintains that vibe, but has enough variation to keep it from being boring. I could compare it to Youth Attack Records bands, and shit like DIE (fellow Brits) and CÜLO, but this really feels like a progression from that kind of stuff. What really surprised me about this record is that it's pretty cliché-free. Don't get me wrong, I'm a sucker for a big breakdown at the end of a song or some heavily reverbed vocals on a pogo-type beat, but I love how this record really leaves all those tricks behind. (AJ)
(La Vida Es Un Mus)

PIG FRENZY – "I Don't Need You / Oral Moral"

Shitpunk garage punk collapse sound. Complete with fake lady orgasms! Seems pretty corny to me? If you wanted this sound idea you could reach for a HOMOSTUPIDS 45 and have that need covered by a good record sans cheese rather than this mediocre one?! (LG)
(Spazz)

PIOUS FAULTS – "Old Thread" LP

Hardcore all over the place with some MINUTEMEN moments and sincere BEEFHEART aping from time to time. The vocals are relatively standard hardcore fare, which adds some levity to the weird ass music. URANIUM CLUB, JUDY AND THE JERKS, and WARM BODIES aren't too out-of-bounds comparisons, but this is darker, more bleak, and every song seems to end with a covertly pummelling hardcore mantra that feels like it's got more to do with making the songs longer than it does with really, truly smashing your brain. But whatever. This is very good. (MR)
(Feel It)

P.L.F – "Jackhammering Deathblow of Nightmarish Trepidation" LP

A blistering, two-piece, grind freak show out of Texas. To be absolutely clear, this record is 100% grind fucking core! There are no

epic doom parts, or any arpeggiated, flanger introspection. Nor are there any "rule the pit" chug along parts. In fact the only kind of breakdown you're going to get here is a psychological one. If you're into bands like BRUTAL TRUTH, NASUM, or the movie *Scanners*, then this one's for you. (BA)
(Six Weeks)

PRIMO! – "Primo Amici" LP

Melbourne, Australia's PRIMO! delivers ten dreamy and melodic tracks that fall somewhere between noise-pop and post-punk. The band blends eerie vocal harmonies, subtle synth tones, and unexpected rhythmic accents, pulling the sound slightly astray of typical pop sensibilities. The tracks are full of catchy vocal melodies and hooks that stick. Definitely something to check out for fans of dreamy, gentle noise pop with a bit of a kick. (HB)
(Upset! The Rhythm)

PROTOMARTYR SPRAY PAINT – "Corinthian Leather / Bags and Cans"

Both bands collaborate on these two tracks rather than taking turns. The first song leads with a hypnotic blend of stripped down disco beats, guitars pushing reverb to the point of a dreamy, oscillating wash, and deep, charismatic vocals that could be at home on a legit '60s era tripped out psychedelic record. The second track sounds a little nostalgic for that early '00s tense but melodic, ultimately somber songwriting sensibility not far from MODEST MOUSE, paired with a similarly nostalgic nod to the style of endearingly off-key group singing you might associate with JAPANTHER—before veering in and out of more experimental guitar territory toward the end of the song. Overall, a lot of talent shines through here and both songs have mixtape potential. (HB)
(Monfonus Press)

QUITMAN – "I Want An Enemy / Skull Base"

Middling and potentially bearded garage sounds from somewhere out East. The handsome flexi looks a whole hell of a lot better than it sounds, too, so the charm here is purely of the youthful tomfoolery variety, lacking any real drive or power. Forgettable... Skip it, chums. (MC)
(Feral Kid)

RAGTIME FRANK & THE DRIVERS – "I Know Said the King" 12"

Unless your band's name is TELEVISION and the year is 1977, there's no real reason for many punk bands to write a nine minute song. RAGTIME FRANK AND THE DRIVERS might make the argument that they aren't a punk band. In that case, there's even less reason for a garage fuzz band to play a BO DIDDLEY beat for that long while flaying an erratic guitar over the top of it as a tribute to the man who created said beat. The other three songs on here continue in a rambling, sprawling, directionless fashion, recalling a less-focused and clawless DOO RAG or OBLIVIANS. (GH)
(ever/never)

SAUCERS – "Third Saucer from the Sun" LP

Do *not* pay attention to the strange, cartoonish, pop punk-like cover image. *Do* pay attention to the fact that it's motherfucking CRAIG BELL! SAUCERS were BELL's band in New Haven between 1977 and 1980, after his time in the MIRRORS and ROCKET FROM THE TOMBS. If you liked ever/never's LP of BELL's material from around this era that came out last year, you'll enjoy this as well; if you haven't heard that, well, now you've got two records to pick up. The man simply is a fantastic songwriter. "Muckraker" is the song here that you've probably heard before, but there's plenty more to enjoy. (MF)
(Rerun)

SCHWACH – "Gegeneinander" EP

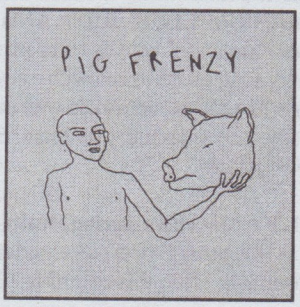
Youth crew is alive and well in Germany. These guys even sing in German, if that tickles your fancy. Pretty varied three tracks, mixing fast and slow with some extra crucial breakdown,s especially on the track "T.I.S.A.L.T.S." which I hope is about bath salts. Killer tri-color pro sleeve and us 'Mericans get a fold-out English lyric explanations sheet. (GB)
(Antikoerper-Export / Colder Than Ever)

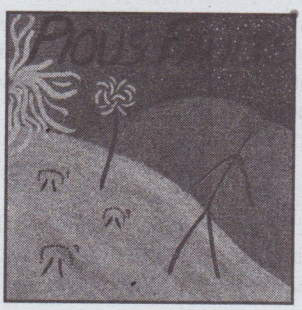
SCYTHE – "Rigor Mortis" EP

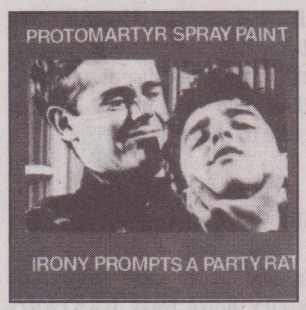
Let's get the shallow stuff out of the way first: this fucking record looks great! Beautifully silk-screened silver-on-black sleeve art and a silver vinyl record with blank black labels. It's a classic minimalist approach with a touch of "mysterious guy hardcore" vibe sans the pretension. The record lives up to its packaging, offering up four tracks of stripped-down hardcore with ZOUO / GHOUL-style vocal vomits over super-raw bridge-chorus-bridge arrangements, highlighted by some sneakily catchy riffs (especially the title track). Along with the Japanese influence, there's a palpable Mexican hardcore feel, especially the brutally direct style of SS-20. The ramshackle, kind of tinny recording suits the record perfectly, giving it a timeless feel. Could be recorded in 2018, could have been in 1983. I liked the demo, but this EP is a very significant improvement over that material. Can't wait to hear what's next! (AU)
(Huayno Amargo / Sin Tremores)

S.H.I.T. – "Complete S.H.I.T." LP

Pros: Come on, it's S.H.I.T. and if you're reading this rag then you know it's good. *Complete S.H.I.T.* compiles the Iron Lung and Lengua Armada EPs, a couple of other 7"ers, the demo from 2012 and one (banging) comp track. Even if you've heard it before, dropping the needle on "Feeding Time" starts the mental pit swirling every damn time, just like when I pressed *play* on the demo six years ago. They are the ultimate squirmy pogo band, and they (inadvertently?) spawned armies of inferior squirmy pogo bands...because they are fucking great. *Cons:* Since most good punks already have most of these tracks (see opening statement: *"Come on, it's S.H.I.T."*), there's nothing here to make you need this banger aside from a completist urge. Just a cool looking cover, 21 rippers, and lyrics cut and pasted from the original releases. I think this record warrants something else, something more. The band is worth it, the band deserves it...but then "Collective Consciousness" pops off and I kinda stopped caring about what is missing because what is here is so fuckin' good. *Conclusion:* Come







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on, it's S.H.I.T. and if you don't already have (all of) these records (and tapes) then you fuckin' need this wax. (WN)
(La Vida Es Un Mus)

SIGHTLINES – "Love Ethic" EP

This is gentle, pleasant pop punk that you can bring home to your family and not fear awkward dinner table conversations. Parts JAWBREAKER and parts SUPERCHUNK with non-confrontational, pleading vocals and jingly jangly guitars, this EP is a nice quick snippet of warm feelings. These four songs left me wanting more, so grab this and then grab their next thing later. (RH)
(Alarum / Double Lunch)

SIGNAL – "Rat Pink Eye" EP

On first listen I placed this somewhere between BLACK FORK and SIN 34? But then by the last song it seemed also like a hardcore band discovering PIL?! It will sound really HC then a weird SACCHARINE TRUST implosion will occur, then it's swiftly back to the regular menu. At any rate, this is wild mutant and classique sounding punk from NY, creative yet tough 'n' snotty. Check it out! Really into it. (LG)
(self-released)

THE SINO HEARTS – "Leave The World Behind" CD

From China via Austria, this trio plays punky power pop rock'n'roll. I'm hearing a mix of NEW YORK DOLLS, SCREECHING WEASEL, and 20/20. Some songs are better than others, and the lead vocals aren't very distinctive, but this isn't bad for a tough retro genre to be in. (RL)
(Target Earth)

SKATTER BRAINZ – "Skater Pirates" CD

I'm reliving 1985 here. By the numbers US skate punk. Yep, FACTION, JFA, and AGRESSION were not in vain. These guys play this style of hardcore with passion and anger. If only Rodney Bingenheimer was still doing those comps...(Although SKATTER BRAINZ are from Florida and not Cali.) Decent skate punk on this six-song release. (RL)
(self-released)

SKELETON – "Pyramid of Skull" EP

This EP is pure mayhem! The Austin band has been around for a few years slinging a particularly rocking mix of hardcore and D-beat, but from what I've heard so far this is their best work. There's a lot of charge in these riffs, some of them—like the main one on "Burning Flame"—sound like they could be on a MOTÖRHEAD record. The band reminds me a lot of DC's WITCHTRIAL, only a little more punk-sounding. The production is gritty and powerful, which also keeps it pretty punk. (AJ)
(Super Secret)

SLOKS – "Holy Motor" CD

First full-length from SLOKS. Most garage rock is, at heart, either dance music (*Back from the Grave*, the OKMONIKS) or psych (*Nuggets*, THEE OH SEES), but SLOKS are pretty explicitly neither. They call themselves no wave garage.That's kind of a misnomer, as no wave generally erases the past, but SLOKS are pretty nostalgic, although not overly so. There are some beats here and there that would fit on a recent BLUES EXPLOSION record, and the guitar tone is not hole-in-the-speaker KINKS or SONICS, but that crispy sound you get when you turn the sustain all the way up on a non-analog guitar pedal. A lot of the songs seem to be based on an interplay between the squalling vocals and unconventional drums, with the guitar just riffing in the spaces in between. This is a good effect. An excellent release for fans of this non-genre. (MR)
(Voodoo Rhythm)

SNAKESKIN – "Hangnail" LP

SNAKESKIN's first jump into the vinyl world is also a bit of a departure from the bedroom recordings of acoustic guitars and drum machines. The haunting vocals are still there but this is full band, fuzzed out guitar rock. Elements of shoegaze and '80s goth songs are mixed up with '90s indie rock like TSUNAMI and WEEZER (you're right, not indie). The better songs are the more dynamic ones that have that classic '90s quiet verse to loud chorus thing going on. (PA)
(State Champion)

SPOWDER – "Health Palm" LP

Some serious musical qualities to this 12", and by that I mean *Oklahoma!* or *The Music Man*. But ignoring that for a second, *Health Palm* sounds a lot like the POSTER CHILDREN, smug and stiff, but, unlike the POSTER CHILDREN, SPOWDER is not good at controlling their worst impulses. Hence the musical numbers and the embarrassing prog breakdowns. Truly, though, this record shows possibilities for an excellent BLACK SABBATH cover band, if SPOWDER didn't insist on being so fast and so twangy. Something to like / hate in every song. Very skillfully played. (MR)
(State Champion)

STIFF LOVE – "Attitudes / Out Of Control"

Sophomore entry from Olympia's latest flames, peripherally related to LYSOL, VERY MENTAL, and probably nine other killer recent combos. Thoroughly legit soundin' switchblade stuff, soaked in attitude (A-side's a dead giveaway, duh), but with a slightly ramshackle execution and top-tier vocal spat to boot. "Out Of Control" has a bit more power, so it gets the victory nod here. Homemade NERVOUS EATERS shirt? Fuckin' A. Recommended sounds for your fucked life. (MC)
(Feel It)

SYSTEMATIC DEATH – "Systema Eleven" EP

Systematic Death's greatest failing as a band was never coming up with a really cool logo that would look good on a patch. Honestly, they're one of the longest running and most consistently great hardcore bands in the world, much less Japan, and they should by rights be repped globally, but they just never had the graphic design chops to match their incredible musical ones. Having become incredibly prolific in the back

end of the 2010s, this is yet another hit in a long line of tremendous new records from the legends. If you've heard the band, you know the deal already: fast, tight, tuneful hardcore delivered with blazing leads (check the end of "Stronger") and energy that makes them the envy of men half their age. There aren't many bands of twenty-year-olds that can produce a track as raging as "Ready Go!" with its swaggering rock lick and incredible drive. These tracks are among the finest the newly rejuvenated band has produced, along with the incredible *The Moon Watches* LP. The minimal packaging is hugely elevated by the typically fantastic Sugi art. Essential! (AU)
(Six Weeks)

SZUMKOT – "Modlitwa" LP

Four songs on this one-sided LP, and when I tell you that one of them is a cover of KILLING JOKE's "The Wait," you'll get the general idea of what you're in for. I will say they do a really good job with the cover—and they have written new lyrics for it in Polish that seem to work (I can't understand them). Two other songs are straightforward but well executed dark gothic punk, and the record wraps up with a slow, dubby lament. Yep. Goth dub. You heard it here first. (AM)
(Pasażer)

TARAKANY! / USELESS ID – split EP

It looks like Israel's USELESS ID is covering Russia's TARAKANY! and visey versey and the result is definitely not right up my alley. USELESS ID still sounds like they are hoping for that big break and given cash for a song of theirs to be in a sports shoe commercial, and TARAKANY! sounds like the tens of thousands of Fat / Epitaph hopefuls of yesteryear. Kind of a bummer. (DZ)
(Jerkoff / Ratgirl)

TERRY – "I'm Terry" LP

Wow, this record, the forthcoming CONSTANT MONGREL LP, and the PRIMO LP are evidence of the true and total domination that this group of Australians have on my mind and record collection! Look at this line up: Amy Hill (of CONSTANT MONGREL, SCHOOL OF RADIANT LIVING), Al Montfort (UV RACE, DICK DIVER, TOTAL CONTROL), Zephyr Pavey (EASTLINK, RUSSELL ST BOMBINGS, TOTAL CONTROL) and Xanthe White (PRIMO)—makes me feel even more like an empty mollusk of a human who has achieved so remarkably little. Throughout my shell of an existence I have been obsessed with all of the TERRY 45s, but a little less so with their LPs until this one...These songs have an unnerving / unsettling pop feel that makes me think of *Chairs Missing*. Really. It feels throwaway and casual like the best music, but also insidious and well thought out, earworms with teeth. The lyrics can seem almost like a word game as well as a secret code message to a radical liberation cell. I can't stop listening to this, and I would advise you to do the same thing with your time and life! Unbelievably good record! (LG)
(Upset the Rhythm)

THE THINGZ – "Supersonic Saucer" LP

The first track left me thinking I wasn't impressed, but the second track has a twangy quirkiness that I really like. I'm a sucker for the alternating male / female vocals thing. It's got a sort of "far-out" '60s sound, almost reminiscent of the B-52'S. The production is quality, and the heavy use of the synthesizer isn't terrible because it creates a *Nuggets* feel. The better tracks create their own eerie mood. Let this one simmer for a minute and you might like it. (KK)
(Coffee Addict)

TRANSIENT + BASTARD NOISE – "Sources of Human Satisfaction" LP

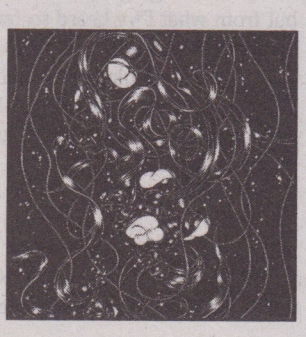
This is not a split LP. It's a collaboration between Portland's TRANSIENT and Earth's long-running DIY noise freak BASTARD NOISE. TRANSIENT plays face-melting hardcore and grindcore that is 100% top-notch. Something about every riff on here feels like they put a fuck-ton of thought into it, and there's not one weak moment on here. BASTARD NOISE adds layers to each song, mostly shining through at the beginning and end of each number and helping to accent brutal parts throughout. My tastes wish that there were more experimental moments of deconstructing the songs themselves...but this is a grind record, not an experimental noise record. Even though all of this was recorded at three different studios, the sound and energy stays consistent throughout the LP. Shit is great! (GH)
(Six Weeks)

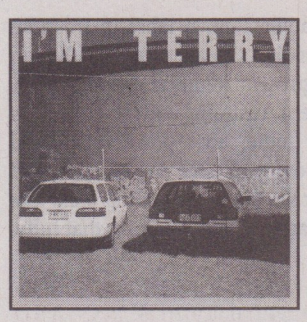
TURQUOIZ NOIZ – "Pray for Rain" LP

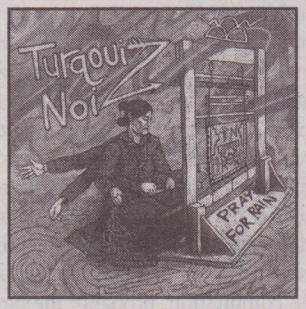
This is a group of Bay Area weirdo rockers that sound like a friendly version of the BUTTHOLE SURFERS or if MR. BUNGLE wanted to perform for children. "1984" is a spazzy, aggressive rocker with megaphone vocals that really stands out that I would recommend as a starting point. The mood of this album drifts backs and forth between chill stoner vibes and the terrifying experience of realizing you drank too much MD 20/20 and are in for a rough night of flailing and throwing up. The most exciting thing about this album is that I don't believe I've heard much that sounds like it, so it's a nice treat to experience something completely unique. Pick this up for a new experience. Listen with friends, intoxicated if that's your game.(RH)
(Related)

UGLY – "Wall / Execration"

Deadly, plodding, sample-laden sludge that perhaps has even more impact because of what it does *not* do. I spent most of "Wall" waiting for something to happen, just getting pummeled for minutes upon end until the song was finished and I found myself sitting anxiously waiting for the thing that I felt was supposed to happen. And that was the point—UGLY set the mood, then they pin you there and just rain down... until you flip the record and it happens all over again. Riffs upon riffs with indescribable tonnage and defiant, affected, all consuming vocals struggling to tear you away from the sheer and simple brutality of the rest of the band. An extremely impressive release—I look forward to hearing what they can do when they can expand the sounds and the sonics in the long playing format. (WN)
(Rotten to The Core)







ULICZNY OPRYSZEK – "Na Zawsze Punk 2" LP

Whoa...a bonus CD?! I don't think I've ever seen a punk record like this...not since METALLICA's *Garage Days Re-Revisited*, only with Polski punk bands! That's tight, ULICZNY OPRYSZEK meticulously researched and paid tribute to twenty ancient (1980s–'90s) Polish punk / hardcore bands and did a cover version of each one. Most of these tracks are from Polish Underground outfits, taken from tapes and radio broadcasts...never with a record out, and barely known outside of Poland. I'm sure some old timer tape traders may know some of these bands / tracks, but it's mostly new to me. Comes with two inserts with history on each band, one in Polish and one in English, which will give you an incredible history lesson and give you a long list of music to track down. Very cool, and yes...a bonus CD. (GB)
(Forever Punk)

THE UNRELEASABLES – "Solitary Confinement" LP

This group of London punks wears their influences on their sleeve, both literally and metaphorically. The record sleeve literally is plastered with horror icons, comic book schlock, and posters for ZERO BOYS, the MISFITS, and the GERMS. The music is loud, fast, and abrasive. If you love the SPITS, you'll love this collection of rude, mean tracks. "I Love My Record Collection More Than My Mum" is my personal favorite track, but the whole album is a silly good time fun picture show party. Get gross with it. (RH)
(Dead Beat)

JIMMY VAPID – "Night Moves" LP

JIMMY VAPID of the VAPIDS makes straightforward punk rock'n'roll in the tradition of the RAMONES or DOA. On this solo album, you can hear the sweat coming off his face as he jerks his guitar back and forth. It is often hard to decide from a recording if the musician is better live or not, but Jimmy has a way of spelling out through his noises that he needs to be seen in person. For not being a live album, you'll have a hard time not feeling like you're right there with him throughout all fourteen tracks. From track to track, there is never a rest or slowdown, just a punk train chugging through with force. Check out the title track or "Flame Hardened" to see what you're in for, and then dive right in. (RH)
(self-released)

VERBAL ASSAULT – "Trial" LP

The late '80s band for the people who grew out of blistering East Coast hardcore but weren't quite ready to go full indie (or full Dischord, if I may be so bold), VERBAL ASSAULT wrote advanced, tuneful songs that still kicked ass. I remember seeing *Trial* for years when I was younger (the tape was in cut-out bins everywhere, it seemed—it didn't look punk enough to be punk, and the squares only buy what they already know...I guess?) but I didn't take the plunge until I was an actual adult, and I was probably better for it. Recorded in 1987, *Trial* harnesses all of the energy and intensity of the early '80s, but slows it down enough to capture the nuances, and songs like "Heal" that would have been (arguably should have been?) knuckle-dragging mosh metal in a different era come off passionate and important. Too many records that should remain in used bins are getting the reissue treatment, but the remix and repackaging of this one gives it new life, and it's very much worth revisiting. (WN)
(Atomic Action)

VITAL IDLES – "Left Hand" LP

I have a Kiwi friend who theorizes that there is some kind of psychic pop songwriting DNA that ties (Scottish settlement) Dunedin in New Zealand with Scotland. There are many examples from the past one could cite to support or debunk this theory, but there are few more fertile musical furrows than contemporary Glasgow, and VITAL IDLES do nothing to disprove it on their debut album. Sharp, abrasive shards of minimal post-punk-pop like bedroom tape trading music collective improvisations serve as the backdrop for Jessica Higgins' deadpan vocals, like DOG FACED HERMANS aping the CLEAN, and not a million miles away from fellow Glaswegians LIFE WITHOUT BUILDINGS, but less repetitive and maybe a bit more engaging to these ears. (AM)
(Upset The Rhythm)

THE WIRMS – "Ain't Gonna Find Me" LP

These rad Southern weirdos are probably CRAMPS fans, but I'm only judging that by the "out there as fuck, but still cohesive," exhausted, panted lyrics, and not at all because of any rockabilly knockoff guitar style. This shit is wild, and I love it! To be honest, there's not a hit, or any song that stands out among the others. Once you've dropped the needle basically anywhere you'd like and let it ride for a minute or two, you've got the idea. As a guitar / drums two piece that sounds like they play until one of them can't move or make a sound any longer, I bet they don't have much choice but to do what they do and sound like they sound. Besides, whatever two minutes you choose to hear are gonna be pretty killer. Totally worth your time. (DZ)
(What's For Breakfast)

V/A – "Death By Hooks" EP

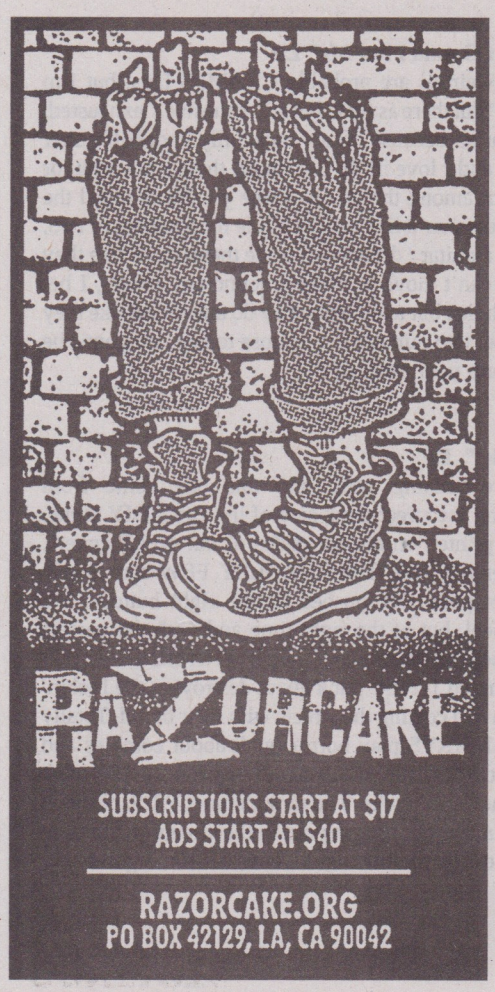
Regional comps are fucking cool, and this one come from Philadelphia, showcasing the street punk side of the city's DIY scene. The covers are screen printed on the backsides of cut up LP covers, giving it a great homemade feel. The CHARLEY FEW start it off, playing anthemic street punk that pushes all the right buttons. It's not reinventing the wheel, but at the right time and with the perfect amount of coffee (or booze), this sounds killer. ATOMIC CRETINS play slightly metallic-tinged 1-2-1-2 punk about destroying the fuckin' suits who keep us down and coating the streets with their blood. Totally catchy. The BARREN MARYS play horror punk about zombies and death. It's a little too chipper for my decidedly-narrow horror punk tastes, but it's still bouncy and catchy. The now-defunct F.T.S. closes it out with tough street punk about hanging out in the streets and getting drunk. Besides a needless breakdown at the end, it's some good shit. Good comp! (GH)
(This Fucking City)

V/A – "Karate Klub Dublin HC//Punk Compilation" LP

Holy fuck, this is absolutely the most punk record I've gotten for review is a dog's age. Produced by a collective, who not only screened the covers (very well!) but risographed the booklet! Obviously, this is a product of Dublin's Karate Klub, a practice / show space, community center and more, featuring bands involved with the project. There's a great diversity of sounds and perspectives offered by the included bands, including queer liberation sounds, brutal crusty death metal, transplanted melodic Polish punk, riot grrl, Oi!, freakout dub, old-school hardcore...Fuck, every style you can think of with nary a dud in the mix. This is a really remarkable compilation, probably the best city-specific compilation since 2013's *Ground Zero NYC*. Normally one lists just the "standout" bands from a comp, but since every single band contributes an excellent track, here's a full list: RAT'S BLOOD, SURGE, the BLOW INS, GRIT, the WHOLE SICK, SISSY, R.A.Z.O.R., DOWTH, STRONG BOYS, DISGUISE, BADB, EXTRA VISION, POZOGA, VENA KAVA, ZONA ZLA, ELECTRIC BILL & THE METER READERS, the OBJECTORZ, PUTREFACTION. Personal favorites included the impeccable melodic punk of the BLOW INS, the SAD BOYS-meets-NYHC stomp of VENA KAVA, the always reliable blown-out chaos of RAT'S BLOOD and the crust metal attack of PUTREFACTION. Fuck, even ELECTRIC BILL's frenetic surf attack fits right in! This is like the *Russia Bombs Finland* of Ireland, just an excellent, must-have compilation that makes you want to hear more from all the included bands and the scene in general. Top notch, but numbered out of 500, so you better grab a copy sharp-ish. (AU)
(Karate Klub)

V/A – "Maudit Tangue #4: Rock Ocean Indien" 2xCD

Just in concept alone this compilation is worth seeking out—two hours of bands associated with the Maudit Tangue label in Réunion (a small French island territory in the Indian Ocean, roughly 1000km east of Madagascar). Included bands represent Réunion, South Africa, India, Mauritius, Madagascar, and Western Australia, and the collection is sequenced by region. Guitar heavy indie, art / noise rock, wild melodic hardcore, fiery garage punk, a couple of twee pop bangers, and loads more. Rather than feeling all over the place, this comp feels like a mixtape full of things you've never heard of...and I endorse that fully. Highly recommended. (WN)
(Maudit Tangue)



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Lords Of Chernobyl: lordsofchernobyl.bandcamp.com
Marion Walker: MarionWalker.org
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Twistworthy: records.twistworthy.com
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DEMOS

All cassettes and CD-Rs are reviewed in this section. Send yours to PO Box 460760, San Francisco, CA 94146 USA and include your contact information. Submissions without artwork will not be considered.

(GH) Greg Harvester
(HB) Heather Blotto
(JR) Jason Ryan
(MA) Matt Badenhop
(MD) Michael De Toffoli
(WN) Robert Collins

ADRENOCHROME – I swear it's different when *punks* make goth punk, and that's the best way for me to help set ADRENOCHROME apart from the crowd. Gina Marie's vocals are sharp and forceful, fighting through the effects as much as anything else and giving everything an urgency that is only reinforced by the drums that creep every so slightly ahead of the beat. All six tracks are full of fire, and they burn into you while the guitars just hover above, overseeing submission. Goth punk for punks. (WN) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, adrenochrome.oakland.bandcamp.com)

AGOTHACLES / SEE//GET – Holy shit, it's 2018 and AGOTHACLES have another recording of putrid bowel movement mincecore. I wish I could tell you these Belgian grind champs wrote a few tracks dedicated to kitten picnics but that is not the case here. Eighteen disgusting, raw, thirty second to a minute tops songs that are really agreeing with this third cup of coffee. SEE// GET has a bastardizing noise cacophony titled "Dream Vacation." It sounds as if Jonathan Livingston Seagull was covered in toxic waste and glowing with radiation so intensely you could hear it. Totally confounding sleeve design, like listening to this. (JR) (19-song cassette, lyrics not included)

ARMY – This is the epitome of lo-fi DIY hardcore. Seven songs in less than ten minutes, all recorded in one breath in one setting. This is their second release and it sounds like they're really establishing themselves in the ATXHC scene. It sounds like it was recorded in a small room with cheap accessible gear and dubbed a few times before you're getting to hear it, a sound that reminds me of what it's like to be in a basement show and have your ears blown out and your head spinning by the end of the set. The only thing cutting through the simplicity is the energy. I feel like they capture a live sound here and I hope they get a chance to tour! (MD) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, ihateiskate.bigcartel.com)

BOO HAG – *Testify* – Guitar / drum dark swamp sounds, reminiscent of some of the more durable early '90s college radio acts, not in sound per se, but in approach. Killer soaring vocal warbles, subdued and appropriately monotonous drums, and layers of echoing guitars all sharing space with field recordings and "other" sounds for dizzying results. This one lands way outside of my typical interests, but I am engrossed. (WN) (7-song CD-R, lyrics not included, boohag.bandcamp.com)

THE DEAD BODY MEN – *Discography 1999–2000* – White suburban teenage punk band very dated to the specified time. Probably inspired by mall punk and whatever else you can get your hands on before you find out who the "cool bands" are, including a completely off-time ska breakdown here and there. Harsher than trying to sound like NOFX or something, and I don't detect any cringeworthy sexist or homophobic lyrics, so that's good. They mostly seem to sing entry-level stuff critical of authority, patriotism, etc. It reminds me of doing 4-track recordings with my middle and high school bands before we knew shit about fuck. If you knew these guys, this might be worth the nostalgia trip. (MA) (29-song cassette, lyrics not included)

DIALER – Philly's DIALER was not what I expected, and this shit is top notch! Spacey-sounding punk that is intentional, but also wild feeling and pissed as fuck. While DIALER definitely uses the blueprints of what has come before (technical, calculated punk with synth and a voice that has vague traces of FILTH), they use these plans to make something that sounds like the future...maybe not the future that we're gonna have, but the one we wished for so long ago...while still railing against the future that is being foisted upon us. Got it? The outro envisions a hellscape scenario for Philadelphia while the imagined sounds of outer space amplify your internal struggles with our unceasing nightmare reality. (GH) (3-song cassette, lyrics included, dialer.bandcamp.com)

ERA BLEAK – The name of this band really gets to the point here. It's about as nihilistic, frantic, and dark as it gets without losing songiness. Guitar riffs that sound a little like a desperate, dissonant WIPERS solo compliment aggressive femme-sounding vocals. More yelling than singing. Everything sounds urgent and dysphoric, with lyrics about consumerist anxiety and nuclear annihilation. I don't think the world is actually ending any time soon, and the fact that bands like ERA BLEAK are still here—still able to write songs, still able to make tapes, still able to reflect on our anxieties, still able to pick apart what exactly is so terrifying and unsettling about our circumstances—proves that at least for now, we are not quite totally fucked yet. (HB) (7-song cassette, lyrics not included, erableakpdx.bandcamp.com)

LOS ESKELETOS – *Masa Negro* – Pretty brave dropping a MY LIFE WITH THE THRILL KILL KULT sample in the opening intro, but I keep listening anyway and the bombastic presentation of a heavy intro riff with a theremin has me intrigued. Then I'm treated to 30+ minutes of a surf MISFITS hybrid and sample laden garage horror punk. I'm more on board when they slow down, if only because LOS ESKELETOS tweak things all over the place on the recording, and there's a lot to listen to. When they drop into straight punk tracks, they become rather pedestrian... come for the vibe, stay for the weird. (WN) (10-song CD-R, lyrics not included, loseskeletos.bandcamp.com)

E.T. – *Phone Homo* – Raw, queer, stripped down basement dance music from Minneapolis that relies on pulsing rhythms and desperate lyrics about loss, anxiety and violence to pull you in. It's like if CC DUST wasn't completely on top of their game, which sounds like a diss, but this is still good. (GH) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, e-t-music.bandcamp.com)

GHOULI – Just in time for Halloween, here is a review of the demo by GHOULI! I

wish I could say that is deliberate, but seems appropriate with this ghoul cover art and tape design. What do you think of POISON GIRLS playing at a pace of DISORDER with the punch of CRO-MAGS? That is what I think of this. With songs like "Don't Touch Me" and "Old Man Yells at Cloud" (which a friend is telling me is a *Simpsons* reference, but the song is incredibly heavier than that) GHOULI demand your attention. Raging and intimidating brutish hardcore from Virginia! (JR) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, ghouli.bandcamp.com)

JAD – This is the second tape from this Polish (Warsaw) hardcore band and it fuckin' rips! JAD takes on the classic sound of USHC mixed with more contemporary shit (like GLUE at their most straightforward) and pummels the shit out of it. There's only about five minutes of music here, but I must've flipped this thing over eight times. Excellent. Lyrics and all liner notes in Polish. (GH) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, jadpunk.bandcamp.com)

KICK IT! – *The Complete Vinyl Discography* – I regret never hearing of this band from Germany. They compose Oi!-affected songs in the vein of COCKNEY REJECTS, ONE WAY SYSTEM also reminding me of early '90s NYC street punk, PUBLIC NUISANCE as well as SUICIDAL SUPERMARKET TROLLEYS, AUGUST SPIES... The hits are nonstop and stitched together very well. A totally repetitive DISCHARGE drum style that seems to never get old under this energy, with melodies of I-SPY and the attitude of MEATMEN. I love the production of this. Lots of static like KAFKA PROSESS... They also do a LIMP WRIST cover! Four cassettes in a lovely cardstock fold-out, four tapes that fly by in a good way. (JR) (24-song four tape set, lyrics not included. kick-it.bandcamp.com)

MASCULINITY CRISIS – *Spit on Me* – Second cassette release from this Seattle grunge-influenced punk band. They sing songs about making out and the decline of our world. Something about the muddy quality of the recording reminds me of the feeling of the *Sub Pop 200* compilation. Lively and energetic and weirdly dreamy. (GH) (5-song cassette, lyrics included, masculinitycrisis.bandcamp.com)

MOUTH / SOMERSET THROWER – SOMERSET THROWER sounds like a more indie rock FOO FIGHTERS. The first MOUTH track sounds like NIRVANA with a hardcore singer. I dunno man, I know there's a crapload of you out there that like this stuff, but I find it to be trite and insufferable. (MA) (4-song cassette, lyrics not included, deadbrokerekerds.bandcamp.com)

NIGHT PROWLER – *Crucible Of Power* – Pure boot-stomping banger with that impossible-to-recreate '80s hardcore buzzsaw guitar and a lurching drum attack that puts you on edge from the start and holds you there. NIGHT PROWLER is a pure and vicious old school US hardcore attack of the highest order, until "Messiah" drops a textbook high school thrash metal dirge in your lap and you don't even know what to do...so you crank "Hammer Of Justice" three times in a row and break everything you own. Maximum recommendation, but be sure not to scuff your knuckles. (WN) (9-song cassette, lyrics included, nightprowlerhardcore.bandcamp.com)

PEPPER KINGS – Bouncy, kinda jokey, innocent–seeming, catchy punk that is a little too goofy for my tastes. There's an autoharp being played in here and the lyrics give it the feel of *Soul Rotation*-era DEAD MILKMEN. (GH) (7-song cassette, lyrics included, fuzzywarbles.bandcamp.com)

PERRA VIDA – Lively punk from Lima. They take a simplistic hardcore approach and enhance things with a bright production and nice hooks from the bass. Unassuming while confident delivery, with no particular trendy style to pin down, which is always a relief for me when hearing new bands. Sort of reminds me of Finland's JUGGLING JUGULARS but sung in Spanish. That means it's rad so check it out! (MA) (5-song cassette, lyrics included, perravida.bandcamp.com)

PLAGUE BOYS – *Great Skate* – Synth-punk from Austin that sounds roughly '80s and falls into a fun punk realm. The title track is a little too far over the new wave line for my tastes, but the other two songs turn it up a notch into more driving, aggressive territory while still staying kind of goofy. A little bit new wave, a little bit KID CHROME, and a little bit SCREAMERS (GH) (3-song cassette, lyrics not included, plagueboys.bandcamp.com)

REGIONAL JUSTICE CENTER – *World of Convenience* – These guys are a notch above your generic powerviolence band (coming from a guy who listens to INFEST once every five years). Depressive and still powerful, varying in attack style, lyrically brief but succinct, and deploying enough circle pit parts rather than getting trapped in the predictable slow / fast switch-off exercise. (MA) (11-song cassette, lyrics included, regionaljusticecenter.bandcamp.com)

RESOUNDING NO – *Gross Dominance* – Dreamy, noisy, melodic pop with layered sounds and compressed vocals that sound like they're coming from an interplanetary transmission. Nothing too straightforward about the riffs, but not so mathy as to be alienating. Double tracked vocals at times recall the thick, velvety vocal tone of the BREEDERS, minus the minimalist songwriting. Synths in the mix (fuzzed-out harpsichord) and fully-experimental interludes keep the recording from being straight up noisy guitar pop. The songs are super catchy and fun with lots of unexpected twists. I hope this is what the future of DIY pop sounds like. (HB) (6-song cassette, lyrics not included, statechampionrecords.bandcamp.com)

SASS – Five kick-your-ass garage punk songs in five minutes that surprisingly enough don't feel rushed. Each song connected, and the key to that is their well, thought-out simplicity. It's just a single dry punchy guitar with a little bit of chorus that doesn't hide behind anything. The guitars are so clear you can hear the pick on the string, giving it an abrasive impact that just sounds so confident. The thing that makes it connect are her bratty and furious vocals, kind of calling to the classic hardcore pissed-off neighborhood kid. Keith Morris and the like. Simple, disenfranchised music. Fuck yea. (MD) (5-song cassette, lyrics not included)

SONIC SUPERCHARGER 66 – Bar friendly punk rock'n'roll for dads who want to seem cool (I'm talking Tuesday Happy Hour bar punk, not wild weekend bar punk). Songs about hot tattooed girls and how their state "rocks," all delivered with a casually limp-dicked approach that is probably supposed to imply that they don't give a fuck...Instead it just makes it seem like they aren't even trying. The only track with any push is "(I Think I'm) Jaded," but the lazy four plus minute "Can't Stand Me" might be a more accurate assessment. (WN) (14-song CD-R, lyrics not included, c/o Ratchet Head Media, Inc., 21 Beau Street, Norwalk, CT 06850)

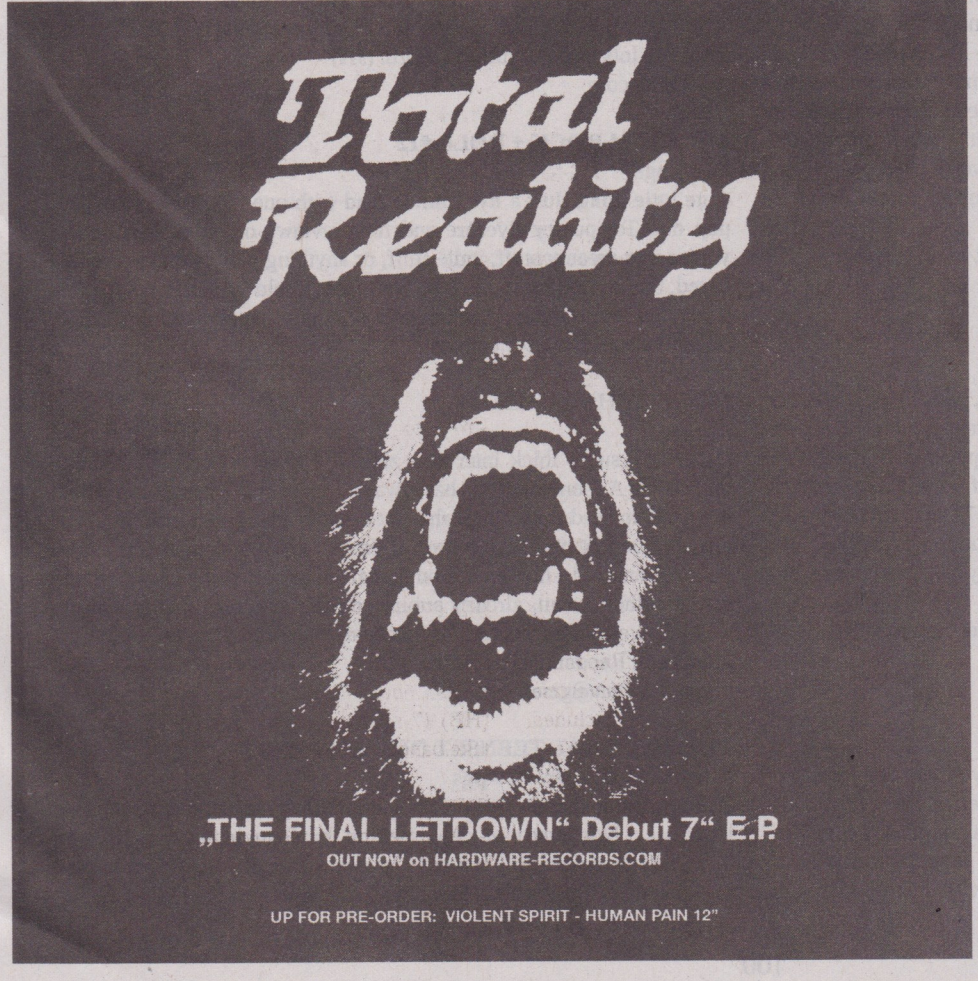
SPIT-TAKE – *Falling Star* – The best moments of this tape are the shameless GET UP KIDS-ripoff ragers, which makes up about fifteen percent of it. The rest is slower and less grungy. It really depends on how you feel about the genre. If you're into emo, then the riffs are emotionally gripping, and the slightly out of tune vocals are endearing. If you're not into emo, then it's whiny and annoying, but I think emo kids kind of already know that. (HB) (7-song cassette, lyrics included, spit-take.bandcamp.com)

SYNTAX – *Cis Nightmare Still Continues* – A shrieking hardcore assault from New Haven, Connecticut with an overt Anti-cis affront. Dismal and shredding, SYNTAX

brings ruthless energy and conviction. Gasping vocals scream profound lyrics; some of my favorite lines being, *"They want us dead / Every freak, every human warhead / Pushing bills that push away the LGBTQIA."* and *"I am going to kill the President / I am going to drink his fucking blood."* This tape is totally refreshing and sort of terrifying. A feral hardcore fucking ripper! Demolishing music, with an in your face real directive to act and react. (JR) (4-song cassette, lyrics included, syntaxct.bandcamp.com)

TROUBLE BOYS – *2* – Nothing like THIN LIZZY, but this Austin trio does a nice crisp rock'n'roll style. Punkier DEAD BOYS sleaze elements stacked up next to more garagey vocal bits makes for a toe-tapping late-'70s Detroit meets NY experience. By the numbers, but enjoyable nonetheless. (MA)

X= – *Symbols* – Another compelling release from X=, this one a collection of tracks recorded and released from 2012-2017. To be able to so seamlessly pass from in your face hardcore punk to head bopping genreless quirkiness to MOVING TARGETS caliber post-hardcore sounds, and make it all seem so natural. That's what makes the band interesting, and what keeps me listening. You might not know what you're going to get as "Tranquilize" fades away and you wait for "Pressure" to start, but you can be rest assured that it will be cerebral and it will be direct... and it will be good. Choice track: "(In)Dignity Of Work," but there isn't a clunker in the mix. (WN) (19-song cassette, lyrics included, exequals.bandcamp.com)



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(JA) Joshua Kay
(JD) Joan DeToro
(MF) Miranda Fisher
(NR) Nimmy Ramona
(RH) Ryan Hertel
(YD) Evie Deller

FETTKAKAO #8
? / 24 pgs
Quarter-sized zine that I'm guessing was included as an afterthought with the Lime Crush LP. The first half is an interview with La Sabotage about their band, art, life etc and the back half is the catalog of releases for this Austrian label. It's cool to get creative and expand what you do with your ephemera. Even the biggest labels in punk are probably just full time hobbies (nobody is doing more than breaking even off of releasing 300 copies of 7"s) and it's nice to use the excuse to play with text / design and include an interview. (JA)
fettkakao.com

FLUORAZINE #4
free/trade / 50 pgs
This zine is the outlet for one prisoner, Kit Brixton, to reach out to the world. You should write and get it. Just make sure to only use white paper and envelopes or else it won't make it past the prison mail inspectors. This is a collection of collages, art, comic strips, mini-essays from this zinester and other prisoners, book reviews, and various other content. It's a good read for sure. This is very meticulously put together and very high quality, so it would certainly be worth paying for if that was allowed. Grab this, get a new pen pal, and make your life and the zinester's life better. (RH)
Kristopher Storey, 26731-018 FMC, PO Box 14500, Lexington, KY 40512

FORDAMNING #15
€4 / 44 pgs
Interviews with Itchy Bugger, Levande Begravd, Mosquitoes, Slender, and Knotwilg, Regional Bears, and Independent Women Records. Record, tape and show reviews. Overviews on Speculum Fight and the Shadow Ring. Further excavation of NZ lathes of yore. This zine rules, and this is sadly the last issue. I'm bummed. The 7" label that they have been running concurrently has also ruled, is continuing, and has hit a particularly good stride of late. I hope that they get the fanzine bug again somewhere soon down the line. (JA)
M. Andersson Harald Stakegatan 1d 415 01 Gothenburg Sweden / iddb.se

MANIC SPRING #2
$3 / 14 pgs
"And practically everything I do is a very thinly veiled cry for help," confesses Maira in *Manic Spring 2*. This zine, which Maira calls "a sequel in two parts," is a diary-like account of their experience with mental illness. They also express deeply personal thoughts on friendship, sex, drugs, self-image, and being misgendered. Through careful handwriting surrounding a self-portrait, Maira wonders, "Every time you misgender me, I think—'is this all I'll ever be to this person? Will I ever escape womanhood?'" This is all pretty heavy stuff, which Maira handles with incredible openness. Readers who grapple with issues of mental health, including social anxiety, overthinking, and questioning "what a 'healthy' brain is supposed to look like," will connect with the writing in this zine. *Manic Spring 2* comes with content warnings. (GM)
mairaandthejorts@gmail.com

MCXT
$15 / 104 pgs
Full color, full size magazine / monograph of MCXT (Monica Canilao and Xara Thustra) and their community. Printed full bleed switching between whole page shots of artwork and snapshots of inspiring Bay Area anti-capitalist, DIY, queer individuals and going ons. Radical and inspiring lots of cool stuff to absorb. (JA)
muddguts.com

MINIMUM ROCK + ROLL #12
$2 / 8 pgs
Cute little thing. Just a five minute read with one interview with indie pop duo Temporary Eyesore and four reviews of music releases. If you're into dreamy stuff, indie stuff, or anything pimply and bedroom-based, this teeny tiny tome is for you. This could've easily been a one pager, but kudos for making this cute lil oddly shaped bastard. (DZ)
reflectivetapes.storenvy.com

MODERN HATE VIBE #6
42 pgs
Super rad, super thick interview zine. It's kinda exactly what I like these days. As someone who has always been bored by band interviews, it's good to read these chats that seem more like punks talking about shit, and getting necessarily deep at times. I wouldn't say this is a total political zine, or a bummer, though. Mixed in between chats are a few of the author's own, already published *MRR* columns that struck me as kinda weird. For me, this is a perfectly balanced perzine / political / punk read. Recommended. (DZ)
bryonybeynon@gmail.com

THE NATIONAL TEENSET OUTSIDER #35
$1/free to prisoners / 36 pgs
Rochester zine that continues to cover the fun trashy side of punk. This issue has a Nobunny interview, stuff on the changing state of women in professional wrestling, an intro to tarot cards, the Scottish cannibal clan that inspired *The Hills Have Eyes*, the hard life of bluegrass legend

Charlie Poole, clowns, pizza, etc. When reviewing past issues, I feel like I have damned this with faint praise / "good efforts"s but I want to try and engage a bit more here because I think it deserves it. This side of punk is not my lane, but the people making this are obviously not idiots and they cover cool / interesting stuff (with maybe too much brevity for my taste [everything is a two-page spread which in a ¼ sized zine = one longish paragraph at best]). This issue has a piece about the changes made to the MTV show *Beavis and Butthead* in 1993 after a five year old burned down his trailer killing his infant sister. The incident became a media flash point after his mother blamed the show. Episodes were edited and the main characters were changed substantially at the height of their popularity. A tale of being a first grade fan of the show interacting with grown up authority's overreaction is deftly interwoven. Even though it was probably just a few messages through Facebook, Sean tracked down the now adult five year old and the whole thing is put into predictable and sad perspective. This is a zine that is mostly about cultural garbage and selling Alfred E. Newman buttons and is proving to have more journalistic value than stuff vying for Pulitzers. I don't know, just a reminder punks don't do themselves any favors by deferring to our baser selves. This is further reinforced by the verbal diarrhea by Mr. Ski-Mask that ends up being a thoughtful articulation on the effects of parental abuse in spite of itself. The Billy Graham thing seems premised on gay panic / homophobic humor. It's not offensive and I think the only ill will is towards Graham and the harm he encouraged but it's just kinda lazy and blah. I guess I'm writing to the people that do this zine or already read it regularly—I'm glad there are punks who are smart, competent, and don't take themselves too seriously, but it's okay to get outta your box too. The punk is dead thing at the end smacks of smart drunk who inadvertently aligns himself with assholes over well meaning comrades because the assholes laugh at his jokes even when he knows it's not his best material. It's reactionary bullshit and you (should) have a better perspective to share. (JA)
W. Carroll 32 Edmonds St #11 Rochester NY 14607 / etsy.com/shops/rochesterteenset

QUINTO QUARTO QUARTERLY #2
$20 / 130 pgs
Has this had any mention in *MRR*? I fear that it might have gotten lost in that sphere where punks that know about it are down but it maybe is viewed as disconnected from our punk lives somehow and not shared there / here. This is the second issue of Jess's "art through interview" project. In depth, interesting talks with people of note. This time it's Linder Sterling, Paula Scher, and Bruce LaBruce. It might seem like LaBruce would be of the most interest to *MRR* readers since he is more or less a "punk" filmmaker, but the Scher interview seems of worthwhile to punks because I feel like so much about modern(punk) life is about personal brands and her practice offers a different perspective. I'm not going to make an argument for Linder because even though not a household name, punks that know... (JA)
q-q-q.org

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING #76
2 stamps / 48 pgs
Lots and lots of content in this 30th anniversary issue of *SFN*! I think catching up with old columnists is a great idea, and it's really interesting to read how the writers' lives have progressed since they last wrote for the zine. The essay about how the author, Idy, got into making zines was also an interesting read, especially when he talked about how his Christianity did or didn't intersect with his zines at any given moment. Less enjoyable for me was over three pages of Dead Milkmen record reviews, and I say this as someone for whom the Milkmen were a very formative band. The beverage reviews were cool, though! Overall, I appreciate Idy's commitment to this making this zine a reflection of his own personal taste, even when it doesn't coincide with mine. Congrats on 30 years! Love the hand-colored covers! (MF)
PO Box 226 Massillon OH 44648 / idysfn@gmail.com

SUBURBAN STRUGGLE: THE CAMPAIGN TO SUPPRESS PUNK IN COSTA MESA, CA (1978–81)
$8 / 132 pgs
The Cuckoo's nest was a music venue that became a focal point for the SoCal scene as it spread out of Hollywood into the burbs and was becoming hardcore. The events around this particular club, time, and events have been covered in at least two documentaries and multiple old dude memoirs. Where this project differs is that it is primary source material from the anti-punk forces at play (period news clippings, police reports, court reports, city council minutes, memos between business leaders and bureaucrats, etc). This period forms a template that punks continue to borrow from and it's fitting that poop and broken bottles were viewed as the main threat and excuse to get rid of punks by those in power. There is good and concise commentary on how the anti-punk representations fed into how the punks viewed themselves and that fed into the representations, etc. The corresponding website has all the same info as this zine but the creative use of xerox plus the appeal of physical objects would make this a worthy addition to your punk history shelf. (JA)
suburbanstrugglezine.com

TEAR THE PETALS OFF OF YOU
$5 ppd / 54 pgs
This is a personal story of the author's abuse and her recovery process intertwined with the story of Halloweencore frontman turned EDM mogul Wil Francis, who was recently outed as a serial abuser. It's heavy, but it's vital. The whole zine is handwritten, allowing the author to highlight and emphasize as she sees fit. I've been out of the Alternative Press scene for nearly a decade, so this zine was the first I heard of this case. The author does an excellent job of illustrating the key points and trying to get to "what do we do now?" This is not easy to get through, but it's something everyone should read. It seems more and more that people are starting to believe the survivors of abuse, but we still have a very long way to go. This zinester addresses this difficult topic poignantly and with such high quality that this zine could be used as a teaching tool for how to talk about abuse. (RH)
psycho.zine@yahoo.com / crapandemic.storenvy.com

THRILLING LIVING #1
$12 / 12 pgs
The first issue of this new zine by former *MRR* coord Grace Ambrose is a stunner, even aesthetically. Crafted while she was in residency at Oddities Prints in Kansas City, she made full use of the facilities there to silkscreen the covers, with the text itself being a five color risograph. There's also a sick poster collecting variations of the handmade covers of the Nixe's lone EP. *Thrilling Living* is a love letter to the DIY, handmade creation of art. Both the interview with Iron Lung Records head honcho Jensen Ward and the illustrated essay penned by Ambrose provoke / invoke the potentiality of the untrained / uninitiated within the serious, hoity-toity art world to create their own mini-universe through limited means. Both Ward and Ambrose engage in these ideas in their own works, specifically in their approach to handmade record sleeves, which Ambrose believes indicates "that making music is fun, that [musicians with handmade record sleeves] reject the idea of conforming to any norm, that these objects document not just what a band sounds like, but what it might feel like to spend time in their midst." Ambrose offers no solutions, no hard and fast conclusions about broader ideas and problems behind handmade art, but she succeeds in tying the idea of the handmade object to the punk ethos. Well done, but unfortunately out of print already. (JD)
thrillingliving@gmail.com

TOINEN VAIHTOEHTO #261
3.34 € / 32 pgs
I can't read a word of Finnish (please write to *Maximum Rocknroll* if you can!) and so I can't do a thorough review of this zine. I wish I

ZINES

could—it features what looks like a potentially sick tour diary from one of my favorite Finnish bands, Kohti Tuhoa. Also included are show reports of the Judas Chair Collective Festival in Helsinki (artists who performed include Death Toll 80k, Usko, and Vegas) and an MDC show in Tampere (I wish I could read about opener Purple X!), and interviews with Sick Urge and Viver Merda. As always, there's also record and zine reviews, all printed on glossy paper with crisp layouts. (JD)
PO BOX 25, 37501 Lempäälä, FINLAND / tv@punkinfinland.net

TOLEDOS PONKEROS THE ZINE Vol. 2 #4
$1 / 24 pgs
Love a small scene (in this case, Toledo, duh); love a true cut-and-paste zine; love the reviews section that covers solely Spanish-language punk in this issue. The rest of it was a lot of in jokes and flyers for shows I didn't go to. Were the parts I enjoyed worth a single dollar? Yeah! So I guess that's ultimately a thumbs up on this one. (MF)
2040 Alvin St., Toledo, OH 43607 / toledoponkeros@gmail.com

TROUBLE WITH NORMAL #155
$2 / 40 pgs
Boone keeps plugging along. 156 will be the 26th anniversary issue and threatens to include an interview with a legend. This one has an interview with Gosh! and the usual show and record reviews. There is an extended rant about and breakdown of the idiocy around Dinesh D'souza, Trump Jr., direct Republican Party connections to fascism and their facile denials of them. Heads up, the price is jumping to the reasonable rate (especially for 2018) of $3 next issue. (JA)
P.O. Box 1444 Columbia, MO 65205-1444 / thetroublewithnormal.tripod.com

WE WORK WITH WHAT WE HAVE #1
$5 / 24 pgs
Thirteen bands. Eight cities. One month. In March 2018, Ian, owner of the 25 Diamonds label, hit the road to see more than eight hours of bands. Through it all, he took a ton of pics. Forty of them made it into this full-color photo zine. In *We Work with What We Have*, Ian documents his "one month of punk" featuring some of his favorite bands: the Wedding Present and Hot Snakes in St. Paul, MN. Stiff Love, Exotica, Patsy, Xylitol, and No Statik in OKC for Everything Is Not OK 4 fest. Blue Dolphin in New Orleans. Drugcharge in Raleigh. Shapeshifter in Minneapolis. Lilac in Chicago. Protomartyr in Milwaukee. My Dear, Sweet Hydropark in Ann Arbor. That's a lot of music, and it made for an "amazing" month, according to Ian. All photos were taken on a smartphone with no flash by Ian. (GM)
25diamonds.com

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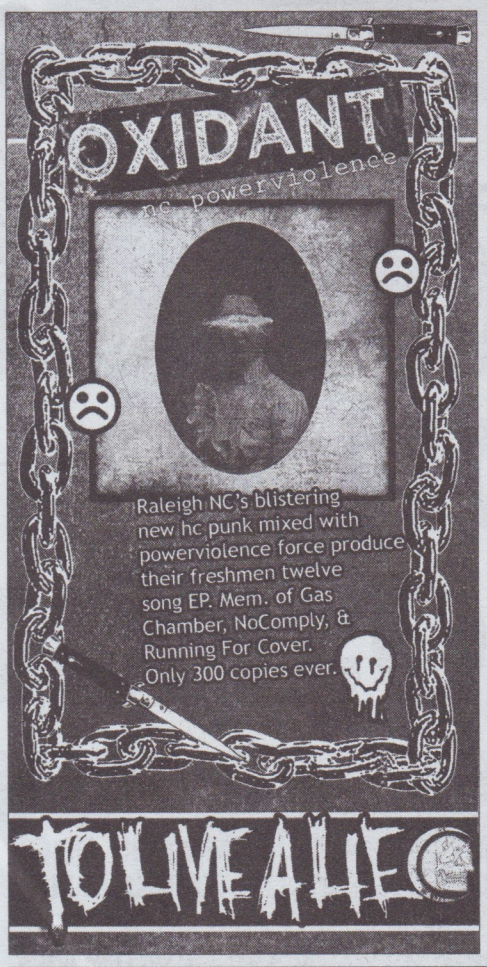
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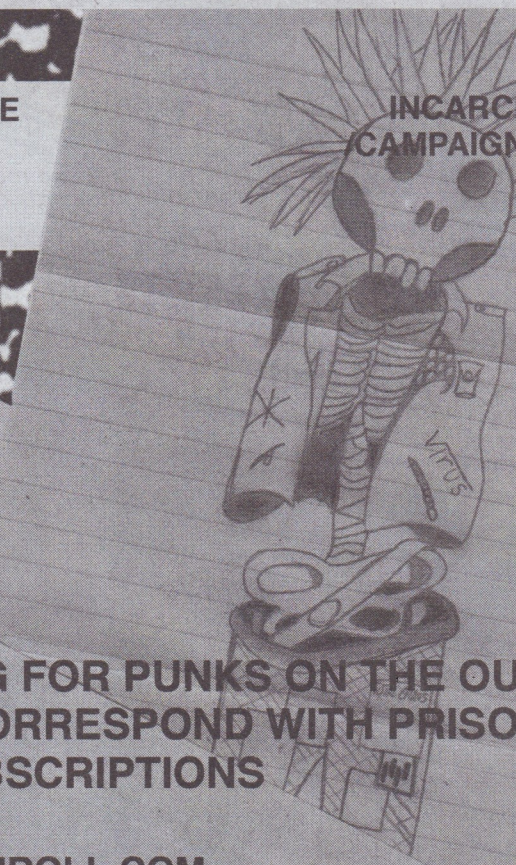

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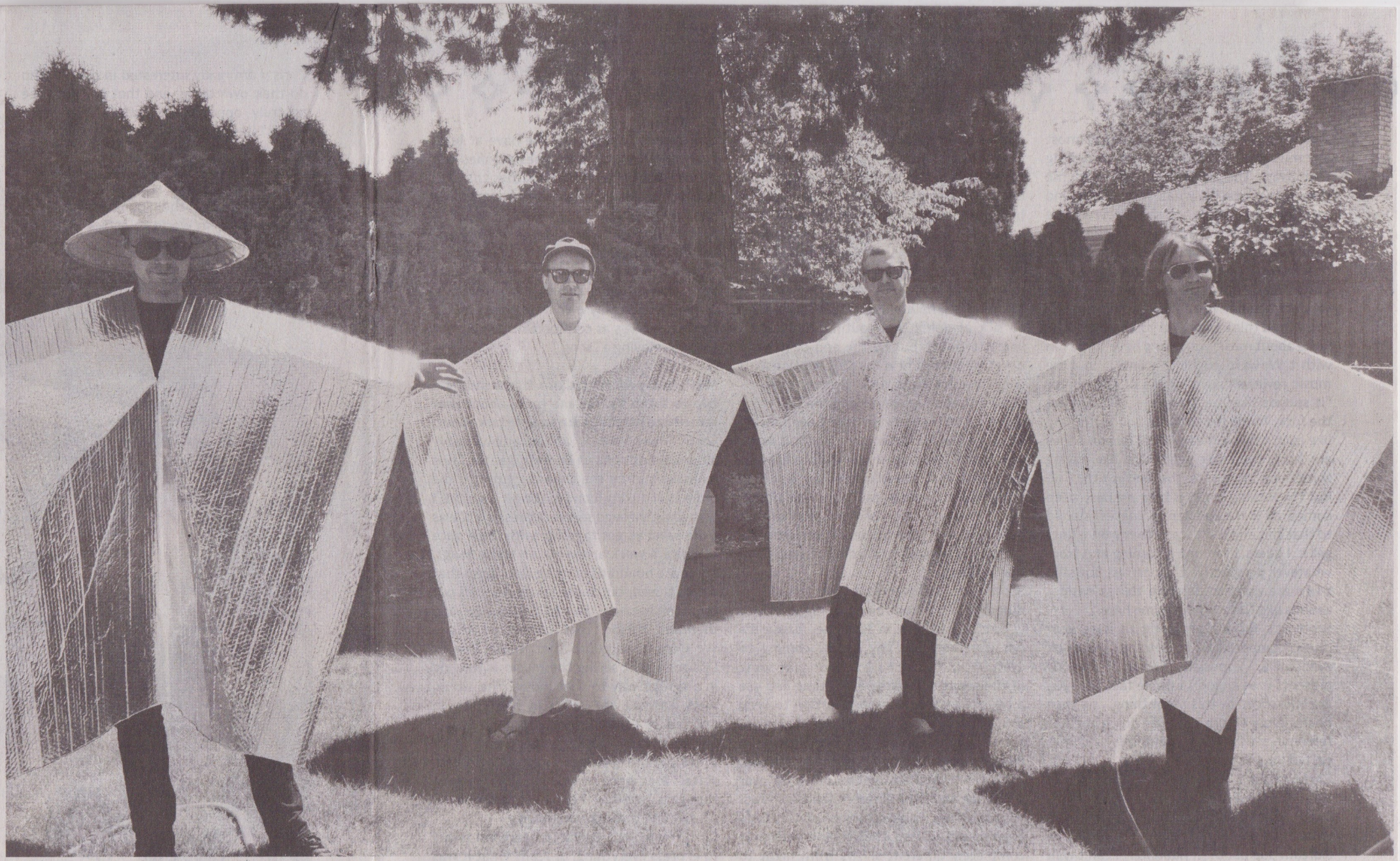

There are
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Neo Boys.
e the rest

like the big three Portland punk bands, but the go to definition of punk for a city is usually not the most accurate definition. When I think of Portland punks, I go back to people like Ursula K. LeGuin or Hazel Hall. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is a revolutionary and mind-changing book. LeGuin's speech

into because making copycat cookie cutter vanilla straight music will gain you lots of popularity here in Portland.

MRR: OK, what was your formative punk rock experience?

Scott: I was a stoner in high school. I

but most people just thought I was a stupid hippy. I was pretty nervous 'cause I was super baked and people were sneering at me and shit, but once the music kicked in and the pit started moving I was excited and then when some dude fell on the ground, the most punk looking dude in the crowd

my first taste of playing to people that just wanted to hear music and were maybe kind of starved for stuff in the town they were from and just that feeling of kinship across political, economical, and musical genres and all that shit. I still would rather play small cities if at all possible. It just seems